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THE THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF MARK'S
GOSPEL AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR MINISTRY

by

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This dissertation, written by

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PREFACE

The Gospel of Mark was, for almost 1800 years, afforded a somewhat inferior place in the New Testament because it was not believed to have the value of the other three Gospels. During the early part of the past century, however, it was found that Mark actually contains the earliest written record of the story of the Lord, and now the modern mind, because of its interest in origins, has tended to reverse the earlier verdict. Most critics today agree that Mark's Gospel has a unique importance all its own, for in Mark we have an authority of first rank for our knowledge of Christian origins. Mark is not only held to be an invaluable source in its own right, but its value is all the more important because it is one of the major sources of the other Gospels.

In the first three chapters of this dissertation I have tried to make an "in depth" study of the interpretations, literary structure and theme of Mark. Chapter IV seeks to point the dissertation in terms of the Rel.D. objective, and the reader will note more of a "professional" theme. The implications for ministry in the fourth chapter are treated only in an introductory fashion, and are not meant to be exhaustive, since a separate volume could be written on each theme.

I wish to express heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Eric L. Titus for wise and able guidance in the preparation of this dissertation. He not only suggested the theme for consideration, but in a helpful spirit made valuable suggestions for the improvement of the manuscript. I am also indebted to Drs. Paul B. Irwin and K. Morgan Edwards for serving on my dissertation committee. I owe special thanks to Mrs. Louis F. Bell, office secretary of the First Christian Church of Barstow, California, for typing the final draft of this dissertation. Beyond that, I must express deep appreciation to my wife, Fern, for encouraging me in the task. At the beginning of the Rel.D. pursuit, when I almost gave up because of the adverse conditions of living far away from the school and carrying a full time charge, she helped me to "put my better self on top again," and I continued on toward the goal.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	page ii
Chapter	
I. RECENT TRENDS OF CRITICAL INTERPRETATION IN	
MARK'S GOSPEL	1
Brief History of Mark in Modern Criticism.	2
Early Tradition Regarding Mark's Gospel.	7
Authorship	9
Date	13
Place of Writing	14
History or Theology?	16
Form Criticism	20
Source Criticism	23
Is Mark Pauline?	26
Semitic Background and Character	28
Summary.	30
II. MARK'S LITERARY STYLE AND STRUCTURE.	32
The Style of Mark.	33
Evidence of Disorder in Mark	39
Evidence of Artistry in Mark	43
The Structure of Mark.	45
Mark's Structure in Recent Critical Opinion.	49
The Christian Calendar Thesis.	50
The Problem of Mark's Ending	53
Summary.	55
III. THE MAJOR THEME OF MARK.	57
Messianic Appointment.	59
The Role of the Messiah.	65
Passion.	73
Resurrection	77
Expected Return.	81
Summary.	84
IV. THE GOSPEL OF MARK: IMPLICATIONS FOR MINISTRY.	88
The Way of the Disciples	89
Implications for Ministry.	98

CONCLUSION	page 113
BIBLIOGRAPHY	117
APPENDIX	122

CHAPTER I

RECENT TRENDS OF CRITICAL INTERPRETATION IN MARK'S GOSPEL

After nineteen centuries of general neglect, the Gospel of Mark has finally come into its own. Eclipsed by its fuller rivals, Matthew and Luke, throughout the ages, Mark's Gospel has proved to be one of the most exciting biblical studies of the past century. Since the discovery in 1835 by Carl Lachmann that Mark was the first of the Gospels to be written, all serious scholars are now agreed that Mark has a unique importance all its own. It may now be truly said that Mark has finally begun to receive the attention it so richly deserves.

Serious study in the Gospels has shown that all four Gospels are written from different points of view. Mark, written to a martyr church, stresses the heroic element demanded by the situation; Matthew clearly reflects the conditions of a more settled Christian community; Luke is a defense of Christianity against the charge that it was a subversive movement; and John is a later meditative and reflective Gospel and is not quite so concerned with the historical element as the Synoptics.

After so many years of neglect, Mark's Gospel, previously the least valued and least read of the Gospels, is now recognized as a primary source of information concerning the ministry of Jesus. It is now found to be funda-

mental to the study of the other Gospels, since Mark's Gospel is earliest, and therefore, as Scott says, is "the most valuable from a historical point of view."¹

Though Matthew and Luke repeat between them almost everything that is found in Mark, the earliest gospel is the most crucial because it allows a critical sifting of history during the period of the gospel writers. While every serious critic now regards Mark of paramount importance, some wonder why Mark was ever preserved for us since it is certain that Matthew and Luke, from the moment they appeared, were regarded as being far superior to Mark's effort. Probably there was some force in the church many centuries ago that would not allow Mark to be discarded, for which our critical age is grateful. In any case, it was not until a century ago that Mark gained the importance it is now given.

BRIEF HISTORY OF MARK IN MODERN CRITICISM

The favorite Gospel of the early church was Matthew, and that is primarily the reason it was placed first in the canon. From the time of Augustine, opinion ruled that Mark was "merely the lackey and abbreviator of Matthew."² The

¹Ernest Findlay Scott, The Literature of the New Testament (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), p.53.

²Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan, 1953), p. 9.

neglect of Mark was so profound that in the fifth century Victor of Antioch says that he had not been able to find the work of an earlier commentator. The next whom we know about is the venerable Bede three centuries later. Commentaries on Mark were written in the Middle Ages and after the Reformation, but it was not till little more than a hundred years ago when the priority of Mark was demonstrated that the Gospel gained unique importance in biblical scholarship. Scholars are so united in critical opinion that Mark is the earliest gospel that Taylor maintains that it is no longer necessary to prove the priority of Mark.³

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, three main theories on Mark were held. J. G. Eichorn in his

³Ibid., p. 11. William R. Farmer, however, in his recent work, The Synoptic Problem: A Critical Analysis (1964), defends the old theory, first propounded by Griesbach in 1783, that Mark was the last of the Synoptics to be written, and that it is based on Matthew and Luke. He suggests that Mark was written about 100-125 A.D., perhaps in Egypt, to meet the need for a shorter Gospel in some influential congregation whose membership included supporters of Luke. Mark is claimed to strike a balance between Matthew and Luke, wherein each of these two Gospels is so fairly treated that no occasion for complaint would be found among supporters of either group. Farmer's historical perspective, however, is far too limited. Upon close examination, Mark is no artificial compromise between Matthew and Luke. Mark has his own distinctive positions not found in Matthew and Luke. Farmer, for example, significantly leaves alone the secrecy theme in Mark, which is unique in Mark's treatment.

Einleitung in das Neue Testament (1804) maintained the Original-Gospel Hypothesis. The Fragment-Hypothesis was held by F. D. Schleiermacher in his Über die Schriften des Lukas. Ein kritischer Versuch (1817), a view which he later abandoned, though it has partially returned in this century. The third thesis was the popular Tradition-Hypothesis, supported by J. L. Gieseler in his Historisch-kritischer Versuch über die Entstehung und die frühesten Schicksale der schriftlichen Evangelien (1818).

Das Leben Jesu (1835) of D. F. Strauss stimulated further study of the synoptic problem. In the same year that Strauss published his volume, C. Lachmann first came up with the solution which till this time has stood the test of subsequent investigation. Lachmann wrote:

There is not so much diversity in the order of the Gospel tales as most people imagine. It is indeed very great if you compare the Synoptic Gospels indiscriminately together, or compare Luke with Matthew; but if you compare Mark with both the others separately the diversity is inconsiderable.⁴

In the United States, the discussions went on concerning historical criticism in Mark, but it was some time before the results of criticism were found in commentaries. The great commentary on Mark by H. B. Swete, first pub-

⁴Ibid., p. 10.

lished in 1898, is renowned for penetrating exegesis, but is almost completely silent in modern criticism. Allan Menzies, in The Earliest Gospel (1901) is liberal in spirit and alludes to historical criticism without treating the new developments fully. Not until A. E. J. Rawlinson's commentary in 1925 did the vital questions of Mark's Gospel receive adequate treatment in the United States.

Three other scholars must be mentioned in passing for instrumental work on Mark at the turn of the century--Julius Wellhausen, Johannes Weiss, and H. J. Holtzmann. With the coming of Form Criticism in 1919, brought to the attention of biblical scholars by Martin Dibelius, Mark was subjected to all kinds of new theories by the form critics. W. Bussmann argued that Mark was compiled in three stages and that Q (the sayings source) includes two sources; A. T. Cadoux claimed that Mark used three written sources, and J. M. C. Crum traced two stages in the making of the Gospel. A steady stream of volumes and discussions directly concerned with Mark followed and continue to grow till the present. Perhaps the most recent dramatic development in Mark came in 1952 when Philip Carrington published his Primitive Christian Calendar, an ingenious claim that Mark consists of a series of lectures for use in the liturgy of the early church, a claim that will be investigated in another chapter (p. 50).

Briefly, the arguments which critics use to conclude that Mark's Gospel is the earliest are summarized by C. E. B. Cranfield: (a) The substance of over ninety per cent of Mark's verses is contained in Matthew, the substance of over fifty per cent in Luke; (b) where the same matter is contained in all three Synoptic gospels, usually more than half of Mark's actual words are to be found either in both Matthew and Luke or in one of them; (c) the order in which the material is arranged in Mark is usually followed by both Matthew and Luke; (d) often where Matthew and/or Luke and Mark differ in language, the language of Matthew and/or Luke is either grammatically or stylistically smoother and more correct than that of Mark; (e) on other occasions something in Mark which could perplex or offend is either absent from, or appears in a less sharp form in Matthew and/or Luke; (f) in Mark the disciples' pre-Resurrection mode of addressing Jesus (as "Teacher," "rabbi") is faithfully reflected, whereas Matthew and Luke often represent him as addressed by the title "Lord," thus reflecting the later usage of the church.⁵

Since the priority of Mark is so widely accepted,

⁵C. E. B. Cranfield, "The Gospel of Mark", Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), III, 269.

there continues to be a steady stream of interest in his Gospel, especially in the critical literary and thematic aspects of Mark--particular areas to which this volume addresses itself. No one denies that Mark has finally come into its own as a primary source of modern biblical interest.

EARLY TRADITION REGARDING MARK'S GOSPEL

We are fortunate in possessing statements regarding Mark's Gospel which carry us back to the second century. The earliest is that of Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, in his Exegesis of the Lord's Oracles (A.D. 140), a work which is lost but from which important quotations are given by Eusebius in his Historia Ecclesiastica. Today this is one of the most pondered-over non-biblical statements among critics. Papias says:

This also the presbyter used to say: "Mark, indeed, who became the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately, as far as he remembered them, the things said or done by the Lord, but not however in order." For he (Mark) had neither heard the Lord nor been his personal follower, but at a later stage, as I said, he had followed Peter, who used to adapt the teachings to the needs of the moment, but not as though he were drawing up a connected account of the oracles of the Lord: so that Mark committed no error in writing certain matters just as he remembered them. For he had only one object in view, namely to leave out nothing of the

things which he had heard, and to include no false statement among them.⁶

It can be seen that the elder's statement ends with the first sentence, and that the remainder is the opinion of Papias himself. The Papias tradition was widely accepted until the priority of Mark was established in the last century and is still accepted by some. Most everyone agrees today that it ought not to be taken to cover everything in Mark, for there is clear evidence that Mark borrowed from other sources in writing the Gospel. In fact, much of the current study given to Mark is because the Papias statement is no longer taken at face value to cover the whole Gospel.

Another early witness to the Gospel is the Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Mark which some date as early as 160-180. This fragment declares:

Mark declared, who is called "Stumpfingered" because he had small fingers in comparison with the size of the rest of his body. He was Peter's interpreter. After the death of Peter himself he wrote down this same gospel in the parts of Italy.⁷

This statement may rely in part on the Papias tradition, but it is important because it adds new information that the Gospel was written after the death of Peter

⁶Frederick C. Grant, "St. Mark," The Interpreter's Bible, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), VII, 630.

⁷Cranfield, op. cit., p. 218.

in Italy.

Irenaeus about A.D. 180 recorded this about Mark:

After their deaths (i.e. Peter's and Paul's) Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself also gave us a written record of the things preached by Peter.⁸

From around the first half of the third century the Papias testimony was also reaffirmed by Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Jerome, with Jerome adding the new information that Mark was the first Bishop of Alexandria. Most critics reject Jerome's statement as an unsound inference to harmonize with Roman tradition.

In summary, it may be stated that though the Papias tradition was widely accepted for nineteen centuries, it has been seriously questioned in the past century of research. All agree that it becomes vulnerable when too much is based upon it. We should not forget that other sources of information were also available to the author of Mark.

AUTHORSHIP

Though there is a good deal of disagreement today over who the real author of Mark was, most scholars main-

⁸A. M. Hunter, The Gospel According to Saint Mark (London: SCM Press, 1957), p. 16.

tain that by and large this is a relatively unimportant issue, for the content of the Gospel is what greatly matters. Nineham aptly states that it is possible to suggest "without fear of misunderstanding that (the) question who precisely wrote the Gospel is a comparatively unimportant one."⁹ Whoever the author was, we know today what sort of material he had at his disposal and the use he made of it, and there is little more of significance to add if we should discover for certain who wrote it.

The Gospel itself is anonymous, and there is no universal agreement that its author's name was Mark. Since no one by that name is known to have been in close association with Jesus or to have been particularly prominent in the early church, however, there would have been no good reason for attributing it to Mark unless he had been known to have written the Gospel. In spite of the tendency to claim direct apostolic authorship for the Gospels, the fact that tradition named one who was not an apostle as the author of this Gospel is in itself almost a guarantee of the truth of the tradition.

But who Mark was has stirred a good deal of controversy. Reputable scholarship today is almost evenly divided on this issue. The question involves whether this

⁹D. E. Nineham, The Gospel of Saint Mark (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 39.

Mark is to be associated with the Mark of Acts 12:12, 25; 13:13; 15:37-39; Col. 4:10; II Tim. 4:11; Philem. 24; and I Pet. 5:13. Such a recognized scholar as Vincent Taylor says that most definitely Mark was the John Mark of Acts and the companion of Paul, and Cranfield agrees that it is virtually certain that the Mark who wrote the Gospel and who is referred to in I Peter, Acts and the Pauline letters are one and the same person. Both claim that the arguments against this identification are hardly convincing. They hold that the reluctance of Jerome to identify the Mark of Philem. 24 with the author of the Gospel: "Mark, . . . whom I take to be the author of the gospel,"¹⁰ as being a little strange, but that it probably reflects the scholar's cautiousness, and that the silence of earlier writers is attributed to the fact that they simply assumed Mark to be John Mark, as so many have to this present day.

On the other hand, the present writer agrees with such reputable critics as Grant and Nineham who maintain that the difficulties in the way of this identification tend to counterbalance the arguments in its favor. They point out that the author was certainly unfamiliar with the geography and topography of northern Palestine, and that the later references to Mark are found in letters

¹⁰Cranfield, op. cit., p. 268.

which are often thought to be pseudipigraphic and to contain personal references whose main purpose is to lend them an air of authenticity. Moreover, Nineham says: ". . . when we remember that Mark (Marcus) was the commonest Latin name in the Roman Empire and that the early Church must have contained innumerable Marks, we realize how precarious any assumption of identity is in this case."¹¹

Some critics maintain that the earliest piece of evidence about Mark as the author--if it can be accepted as such--is a bit of autobiography found in Mark that is peculiar to his Gospel alone. Mark 14: 51,52 says:

A young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body; and they seized him, but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.

This description does not suggest that the young man was one of the twelve disciples, and the natural inference, some say, is that the story came from the young man himself since it is so insignificant a detail that there seems no good reason why Mark should record it if he were not the man. The opinion of scholars is divided on this issue, and most who accept it believe that the author of this Gospel is the John Mark of Acts. For our part, we will reject this theory on the basis that the evidence for such is far too scanty.

¹¹Nineham, op. cit., p. 39.

We must conclude that while the question of authorship is not of great importance, the claim that Mark is the John Mark of other books is generally unfounded. Besides, as Grant says, it adds nothing to our understanding of the Gospel to call him (John Mark) the author, and "to all intents and purposes we must study the Gospel as if it were anonymous, like most of the books of the Bible."¹²

DATE

It is most generally agreed today that Mark's Gospel was written during the period A.D. 62-75. C. C. Torrey tries to date the Gospel A.D. 39-40, based upon the "Little Apocalypse" (Mark 13), but this is generally rejected. If, however, the statements of Irenaeus and the Anti-Marcionite Prologue are correct (to the effect that Mark wrote after the deaths of Peter and Paul), a date earlier than 62 is excluded. It appears almost certain that Peter was martyred in the Neronian persecution (A.D. 64-65).

A date as high as A.D. 85 is suggested by Branscomb, but most critics reject this as unnecessarily late and claim that it has the strong objection of internal evidence against it.

The use of Mark by the later Synoptists makes a date

¹²Grant, op. cit., p. 632.

later than A.D. 70 unlikely, and the fact that Chapter 13 seems uninvolved with the events of the Jewish War of 66-70 suggests that Mark was written before the later stages of that war.

There is almost complete unanimity that the Gospel was written sometime during the period 65-70.

PLACE OF WRITING

Overwhelming opinion as to the place of composition of Mark's Gospel favors Rome. That Mark was written in Rome is not contradicted in antiquity except by Chrysostom, and that is probably a misunderstanding of Eusebius' statement: "They say that Mark set out for Egypt and was first to preach there the gospel which he had composed."¹³ Some hold the opinion that the Gospel was composed in Antioch because of John the Elder of the Papias statement who lived in the East, and because of the strong center of Roman culture that was found in Antioch.

Though we cannot speak with certainty as to the place the Gospel was written, the case for Rome is by far the strongest. Mark clearly writes with Gentile readers in view, and the fact that Rome was predominately Gentile

¹³Sherman E. Johnson, The Gospel According to St. Mark (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 15.

is illustrated by Paul's letter to the Romans.

Mark was also written for a church which had known or was expecting persecution for the faith, and all of this is suitable to a Roman origin. Furthermore, it is easier to explain how Mark won an authoritative position if it had the influence of the Roman church behind it. (There is also the fact previously mentioned that the writer of Mark is not himself acquainted with Palestine.)

B. W. Bacon, in his penetrating book Is Mark A Roman Gospel? affirms that it is after falling back upon the critical phenomena of dissemination, and weighing the internal evidence. He infers that the Papias tradition confirms the belief that Mark was written in Rome, and that Papias himself did not base his statement upon tradition alone. In reference to dissemination, Bacon agrees that Rome was the most probable place for wide distribution:

Of all possible quarters from which to expect early and wide dissemination of such a gospel as Mark, Rome is by all odds the most probable. That this earliest of extant Greek Gospels should attain its short-lived supremacy under the simple title "According to Mark" is explicable under the theory of Roman provenance, but hardly otherwise.¹⁴

From the internal evidence of language, editorial glosses and explanations, local geography, Christology, and the

¹⁴Benjamin W. Bacon, Is Mark a Roman Gospel? (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919), p. 46.

"Paulinism" of Mark, Bacon claims that without doubt this Gospel has a Roman origin.

It seems reasonable to regard what early tradition says about Mark being written in Rome as worthy of acceptance. The internal evidence, by its vocabulary and milieu strongly indicates that Mark is a Roman Gospel.

HISTORY OR THEOLOGY?

Since it became apparent that there was no earlier Gospel by which Mark could be compared, there arose in the nineteenth century the idea that Mark's Gospel was purely objective history. At the turn of this century, however, a new interpretation arose with the appearance in 1901 of Wrede's Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien. Wrede's basic insight is that the historical Jesus cannot be easily seen in Mark. Albert Schweitzer agreed with Wrede that Mark is not built upon historical considerations of a pragmatic nature, but that it was primarily theologically motivated. Ever since, there has been a running debate among commentators as to the real purpose of Mark's Gospel.

Most critics today believe that there is both a historical and theological interest and viewpoint in the Second Gospel. Branscomb states this position:

The contrast of information and interpretation, or history and theology, is really a false antithesis. It has meaning only in terms of relative

importance. All history is really interpretation . . . To ask whether the Gospel is a theological or historical work is thus to set up a false alternative. It is both.¹⁵

With the range of scholarly opinion, almost every critic would accept that position. But as to which of these interests is primary--the historical or the theological--there is heated debate.

Branscomb, for example, goes on to attest that Mark's interest was primarily historical: ". . . dogma and doctrine seem plainly secondary with the evangelist to telling the Christian story as it was known and believed in the Churches of the Hellenistic world a generation after Jesus' death."¹⁶ He maintains that Mark was interested in theological beliefs, but that if this is thought of as his primary work, two basic errors are the result: (1) the assumption that the Gospel was written to maintain certain specific doctrines and beliefs, and (2) the description of Mark primarily as a theologian.

Harold A. Guy also states that though attempts to treat Mark as a theological work have an element of truth which is important to recognize that there is much in the book that has no connection with a specifically theologi-

¹⁵B. Harvie Branscomb, The Gospel of Mark (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937), p. xxii.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 22.

cal purpose. He claims that the book is written as history, and that theological theory does not explain the form of the book, in its strange fusion of order and disorder.¹⁷

Perhaps guilty of overstatement, H. J. Cadbury says that Mark does not betray any subjectiveness of his own, and he goes on to say that "there is scarcely any thoroughgoing theological theory that permeates the whole narrative, and many things remain that a single unified theory would hardly have selected or left unexpurgated. The material was already miscellaneous, and St. Mark tried as little to bring it into theological as into biographical articulation."¹⁸

On the other hand, many critics hold that the theological interest was primary with Mark. Indignant at any attempt to treat Mark as a biography of Jesus, J. H. Ropes calls the book a "theological pamphlet" and a discussion of a theological problem in the form of a dramatic historical sketch.¹⁹

F. C. Grant, whose criticism must be highly valued, states that the Synoptics, and especially the earliest gospel, are not histories or biographies, but didactic, apolo-

¹⁷ Harold A. Guy, The Origin of the Gospel of Mark (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), pp. 60-62.

¹⁸ Nineham, op. cit., pp. 29, 30.

¹⁹ Guy, op. cit., p. 56.

getic, "evangelical" writings.²⁰ In other words, Grant maintains that Mark's historical interest was plainly secondary. He claims that Mark was not writing to support any particular theological view, though theology is certainly implicit in his book.

For years Mark was felt to be a historical gospel and John's gospel a theological document. In recent days, however, critics have found that the gulf between the two gospels is not as profound as was supposed. It is now felt in many quarters that Mark, like John, was primarily expressing his religious faith in terms of the language that John uses in 20:31. Mark's main purpose was to support faith, not simply to pass on historical information. His contents cannot be called coldly objective and neutral, but are definitely colored in terms of faith.

While seeking to prove that the insight that Mark wrote not as an objective historian but from the point of view of Christian faith is ambiguous and misleading, James Robinson calls the contemporary trend in Mark "theologically understood history."²¹ The present writer cannot fully agree with Robinson's conclusions, though his approach is

²⁰Grant, op. cit., p. 629.

²¹James M. Robinson, The Problem of History in Mark (Naperville, Ill.: Allenson, 1957), p. 12.

sound so long as the theological emphasis is not ignored. The author's conviction is that Mark is both a theological and historical work, with primary emphasis being given to its concern for faith.

FORM CRITICISM

The purpose of form criticism is to get behind the written gospels and their sources to the oral tradition as it circulated prior to the writing of the accounts. The form critics study each separate story and saying in the gospels, in order to see why and how it was used in the early church. The most notable of the form-critics today are four Germans, Martin Dibelius, whom we have already mentioned in connection with form criticism whose work From Tradition to Gospel is one of the basic texts in the field; Rudolph Bultmann, K. L. Schmidt and H. Gunkel. These form critics classify the various units in the Gospel (they call them pericopae from the Greek pericope meaning section or paragraph) according to their form.

Form criticism is actually a branch of historical criticism, and Grant says that a better name for this type of investigation would be "tradition criticism."²² The

²²Frederick C. Grant, The Earliest Gospel (New York: Abingdon Press, 1943), p. 39.

form critics maintain that the gospel tradition was handed down through the preaching and teaching of the first generation Christians. This is what Dibelius means when he says: "In the beginning was the preaching."²³ Since Mark's Gospel is the earliest, the form critics are mainly concerned, and rightly so, with the tradition behind Mark. The dependence of Matthew and Luke upon Mark is accepted by all the form critics.

Upon examination, Mark's Gospel appears to fall into five or six main groupings: anecdotes, parables, sayings, miracle tales, and legends. Each of these types had its place in early Christianity. Most likely what Mark had to work on was a series of essentially disconnected stories. Nineham graphically says: "This at once explains an otherwise puzzling feature of the Gospel, the way it consists of a number of unrelated paragraphs set down one after another with very little organic connexion, almost like a series of snapshots placed side by side in a photograph album."²⁴ The literary structure of Mark will be studied in more detail in a later chapter.

Most everyone recognizes that form criticism has made a positive contribution to the study of the Gospels,

²³Grant, "St. Mark," p. 634.

²⁴Nineham, op. cit., p. 27.

and especially to Mark in particular. However, it is interesting to point out that while most everyone lauds the first principles of form criticism, Philip Carrington, like several contemporary scholars in Mark, insists that it is unwise to be guided by all the assumptions and speculations that spring from the various views of the form critics. It is also noteworthy that none of the form critics pay much attention to the testimony of Papias, and some would consider this a weighty objection. While none of the form critics deny the Papias statement as such, this type of investigation would put his statement in serious question.

The form critics would have us to consider Mark as more of an editor than an author. Since the Gospel was based on oral tradition, some parts of which were perhaps already in writing, the main handiwork of the author, say these critics, is to be found in the editing of the material--the connecting links, introductions and conclusions without which the narrative would mainly stand out as independent stories.

Far from undermining the authority of the earliest gospel, form criticism really supports it by providing a more satisfactory approach than the old-fashioned opinion that the Gospel of Mark is really only the gospel of Peter--a view that is far out of date in responsible criticism today.

SOURCE CRITICISM

With the success of determining that Matthew and Luke used Mark for their source, the hope also came that the sources of Mark could also be traced. Internal evidence in Mark seems to indicate that earlier sources were used, but determining these sources is a very difficult matter. While many theories have been proposed in this century concerning Mark's sources, there are, in fact, no earlier documents present with which to compare Mark. Though many of the theories are ingenious, all of them are conjectural and deal to a great extent with subjective considerations. None of the theories has met with anything like general acceptance, though the investigation has in no way proved barren.

Inquiries have in the main tried to prove the existence of a Ur-Markus, or Original or Proto-Mark. According to this theory, Matthew and Luke used Ur-Markus and not our present Gospel. Some critics maintain the Ur-Markus was much shorter than our present Mark. It is claimed that this explains why two big sections of Mark are omitted by Luke. Others believe that the Original Mark was a longer edition than our present Gospel which included much of the matter found in both Matthew and Luke or just in one of these two.

Grant maintains that insuperable objections face these hypotheses: (a) that Mark in its present form is obviously a homogeneous work; (b) that there is not enough agreement between Matthew and Luke in non-Markan passages to prove a common original; and (c) that the assumed evidence is better accounted for by taking into consideration stages of development in the tradition prior to Mark.²⁵

The compilation hypotheses should also be considered in our study of source criticism. According to these theories, Mark was simply editing other "Gospels" which were already in circulation. In his Sources of the Second Gospel (1935), A. T. Cadoux claims that the evangelist used three sources--a Palestinian Gospel, written in Aramaic about A.D. 40, perhaps under the authority of Peter; a Gospel of the Dispersion, written by Mark himself about A.D. 67 in Alexandria with a pro-Jewish bent; and a Gentile Gospel, written about A.D. 50 for the work of Paul among the Gentiles. It is best to reject Cadoux's work on the basis that it is highly conjectural.

Almost the same conclusion as Cadoux's is reached by J. M. C. Crum in his St. Mark's Gospel: Two Stages of its Making (1936). Crum believes that Mark I is a Gospel story which might have been written by a man who grew up in

²⁵Grant, "St. Mark," p. 636.

close contact with Peter from A.D. 30 to 60, and that Mark II is a second writing which works over and amplifies Mark I, written about A.D. 65 and reflecting a later Christology. Crum's main contribution is that he points up the fact that Mark is not simply an account of Peter's memoirs, but that behind the Gospel lies the experience of a living church.

An even more elaborate attempt to find the sources used in Mark's Gospel is by W. L. Knox, who claims to identify at least nine sources which existed "as independent units before their compilation by Mark into the form of a 'Gospel'."26

Probably the most satisfactory solution rests in the opinion that the author used several short written sources along with oral tradition in compiling his Gospel. Most reputable critics hold that there are stages of development reflected in Mark, but as Grant says: " . . . these are Marcan or pre-Marcan; there has been no 'growth' of the Gospel after it left its author's hand, . . . nor was the writing of the book the work of two or three separate 'authors'."27

²⁶Guy, op. cit., p. 47.

²⁷Grant, "St. Mark," p. 636.

IS MARK PAULINE?

The theory that Mark is essentially a Pauline Gospel goes back to G. Volkmar in 1857, who believed that the entire work was designated by the evangelist as "an apology for the Apostle of the Gentiles," and an allegorical presentation of Pauline doctrine in the form of a narrative.²⁸ Though the Paulinism of Mark has been hotly debated for over a century, it is generally abandoned by critics today. Consensus of scholarship holds that Volkmar went too far in seeking to prove Mark's dependence upon Paul on almost every page of the Gospel. With the allegorical principle in Mark correctly refuted, much of the support for Paulinism in Mark disappears.

Volkmar's views, however, were a welcome relief from the one-sided Tübingen theory, according to which Mark was a "neutral" in the great apostolic controversy over Jewish Christianity--a tradition which held that Mark derived from Matthew and completely ignored the development of a Gentile type of Christianity on its own.

In more recent times, the Pauline character of Mark has been maintained by Loisy and Bacon, partly due to the

²⁸A. E. J. Rawlinson, St. Mark (London: Methuen, 1925), p. xliii.

belief that Mark was written in Rome that traces of Paul's influence would certainly be felt. In stating that he doubts that Mark knew the Pauline Epistles, but that we cannot account for the Gospel without the life, thought and teaching of Paul, Bacon says: "Mark shows a direct, but not literary dependence on the teaching of the great Apostle to Gentiles."²⁹

The Pauline character of Mark has been strongly denied by Schweitzer, Wernle, Werner and Guy on the basis of vocabulary and ideas in Mark which are foreign to Paul.³⁰ Grant also belongs in this group, and says: ". . . common Gentile Christianity, rather than Paulinism . . . lies behind the Gospel of Mark."³¹ Werner concludes that where Mark and Paul agree that the tradition consists of primitive Christian ideas, that distinctive Pauline ideas are wanting in Mark or are differently presented, and that, accordingly, the suggestion of the influence of Pauline theology must be dismissed.³² On the whole, it must be stated that the greatest force lies behind these contentions.

²⁹Taylor, op., cit., p. 17.

³⁰For a full discussion see Guy, op. cit., p. 165 ff.

³¹Grant, The Earliest Gospel, p. 206.

³²Taylor, op. cit., p. 129.

SEMITIC BACKGROUND AND CHARACTER

We must remember, as Carrington says: "Christianity was a Jewish religious movement which expanded into the Gentile world through the Greek-speaking synagogue, winning Gentile converts, but never losing its Jewish character or breaking its connexion with Judaism."³³

Closely involved with the unmistakable Semitic background of Mark is the question whether the Gospel is a translation of an Aramaic original (the language of Jesus and his apostles) or whether the Greek suggests dependence upon Aramaic tradition.

C. C. Torrey argues for an Aramaic origin of all four Gospels, basing his views mainly on mistranslations of Aramaic into Greek. While the weight of critical scholarship rejects Torrey's opinion that Mark was first written in Aramaic, almost all critics are confident that its sayings and many of its narratives stand near Semitic tradition and that they first circulated in Aramaic. Thus M. Black concludes: "An Aramaic sayings-source or tradition lies behind the Synoptic Gospels, (but) whether that source was written or oral, it is not possible from the evidence

³³Philip Carrington, According to Mark (Cambridge, Eng.: University Press, 1960), p. 16

to decide.³⁴ There is good reason to conclude that there is an Aramaic background to the Greek of the Gospel, but to state that it was a written Aramaic source is highly speculative, most scholars say. While expressing gratitude to Torrey for reconstructing the Aramaic originals of these traditions, the majority of critics today agree with Grant that "the theory of Aramaic Gospels goes much too far."³⁵

There is, in fact, unhappily, a definite strain of anti-Semitism in Mark. This may be true partly to the circumstances under which the gospel tradition was handed down, and partly due to Mark himself because of his Roman Christian environment. It is true that the Gospel of John is more antagonistic to the Jews than Mark, but there are traces of it in Mark which are toned down in Matthew and Luke.

Professor H. A. L. Fisher has observed in his History of Europe that although Christianity was originally Jewish as time went on Christian and Jew sprang apart. "It is thus," he says, "that St. Mark, the earliest evangelist, appears to many Jews as being, although without malice, the first of the line of anti-Semitic authors."³⁶

³⁴Taylor, op. cit., p. 55.

³⁵Grant, The Earliest Gospel, p. 90.

³⁶Ibid., p. 209.

SUMMARY

It can readily be seen from the foregoing study that, with the acknowledgment of Mark as the earliest Gospel in the middle of the past century, Mark has now gained a unique importance all its own. In Mark we have an authority of first rank for our knowledge of the gospel tradition. We have in Mark no mere biography or history but basically a theological narrative to strengthen the faith of the early church.

In the past century, Mark's Gospel has had responsible critics study it from many different points of view. It is now generally recognized that Mark is the most crucial of the Gospels in terms of form and source criticism. Far from undermining the authority of the Gospel, critical study has given a far more satisfactory approach to its contents and milieu than was previously the case. Still, the most we know about Mark comes from its own pages, and even though many conjectural theories are rejected by most critics today, many of these theories have been of great profit for critical study.

Taylor rightly states the unique importance of this Gospel: "Without this Gospel, which is not only invaluable in itself, but is also one of the most important sources upon which all the Gospels depend, it is impossible to ac-

count for the history of primitive Christianity, or to imagine the perils from which it was preserved."³⁷

We now turn to a study of Mark's Gospel in terms of its literary and thematic structure.

³⁷Taylor, op. cit., p. 149.

CHAPTER II

MARK'S LITERARY STYLE AND STRUCTURE

Involved in the belated recognition of the priority of Mark is the fact that the earliest Gospel inaugurated Christianity in a literary movement. Since there is no indication that a Gospel as a form of literature existed prior to Mark, the importance of its literary quality and structure is readily apparent. Eric L. Titus observes that Mark's Gospel set the literary pattern for later books of its type, both biblical and non-biblical, and says that the earlier letters of Paul, while of great importance, were informal documents and do not, like Mark, present a self-conscious literary movement.¹

It is apparent that Matthew and Luke are patterned after Mark, and there is evidence that even John, in his different structure, was dependent to some degree upon the earliest Gospel. Since Mark's little document called the Gospel-writing movement into being, it no doubt possessed an enormous influence in the early Christian movement. Even though Matthew and Luke most likely pondered long and carefully the Markan narrative and obviously were dissatisfied with it (probably the reason they produced their own

¹Eric Lane Titus, Essentials of New Testament Study (New York, Ronald Press, 1958), p. 154.

writings), they too were no doubt tremendously indebted to it. Mark's contribution to the literary history of Christianity can scarcely be overemphasized.

THE STYLE OF MARK

One of the reasons why Mark was for so long neglected and held to be inferior to the other Gospels is because of Mark's essentially non-literary Greek. From the text itself there is ample evidence that the Evangelist had an imperfect mastery of the Greek language. Critics have often pointed out Mark's terseness and rough vigor, as Hunter says: "Mark is not a trained man of letters--indeed, he often writes clumsily, inelegantly, ungrammatically."² It is a matter of dismay to some that the first written record should display a measure of uncouthness, but if the oral nature of the material is kept in mind there should be no occasion for concern. The style of Mark is close to the everyday speech of the time. The new approach to the study of Mark is to emphasize the merits of his simplicity and directness which bear a naturalness in speaking rather than an uncultured style of writing.

The Greek of Mark is the kind which probably was

²A. M. Hunter, The Gospel According to Saint Mark (London: SCM Press, 1957), p. 16.

spoken by the lower classes in Rome, and it reflects strongly the influence of Aramaic. Though Mark's style is certainly rough and colloquial, it is not fair to call it incompetent, for Mark does possess a reasonable grasp of Greek.

Morton Scott Enslin protests vigorously the claim that Mark writes "rude" and even "wretched" Greek. He says: "Conscious rhetoric and polished periods are absent; but in their place is a tremendous vitality, a vividness and intensity which is at times positively painful . . . (Mark) demands much from his readers."³ The new school of thought among many critics today is that while Mark writes in a relatively simple and popular form of Greek, he nonetheless is an artist in his own right by the powerful and artistic way in which he tells his story.

An example of clumsiness in Mark's Gospel may be found in 9:9-13:

And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of man should have risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things; and how is it written of the

³Morton Scott Enslin, "The Artistry of Mark," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXVI, 4 (December 1947), 388.

Son of man, that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."

The student of Greek will find verses 11-13 even more confused than the English translation:

καὶ ἐπηρωτῶν αὐτὸν λέγοντες ὅτι λέγουσιν οἱ γραμματεῖς ὅτι Ἠλείαν δεῖ εἰσελθεῖν πρῶτον; ὁ δὲ ἐφ' αὐτοῖς Ἠλείας μὲν, εἰ θῶν, πρῶτον ἀποκρίσας ἐκεῖνοι πάντα καὶ πῶς τελεῖται ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἵνα πολλὰ πάθῃ καὶ ἐξουδενηθῇ; ἀλλὰ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι καὶ Ἠλείας ἐληλυθεν, καὶ ἐποίησαν αὐτῷ, ὅσα ἤλεγον καθὼς τελεῖται ἐν αὐτῷ.

In Matthew 17:10-12, Mark's verse 12b is taken as a positive statement and placed at the end. Torrey and Rieu take verse 12a as a question, but in this case the question must be rhetorical, for verse 13 affirms Elijah's coming. C. H. Turner arranges the verses as follows: verses 10, 12b, 11, 12a, 13; Grant suggests that another possibility would be verses 10, 11, 12a, 13c, 13ab, 12b.

In any event, a lack of literary refinement is evident here. In its place we note evidence of the originally oral nature of the material, for a speaker is allowed more freedom than a writer. This suggests that the words of a speaker were either taken down verbatim or else had reached such a set form that when put into writing the rough style, the crude grammar and constructions were reproduced.

Frequently found in Mark are changes in tenses of

verb where the author suddenly adopts a present tense after a past tense. A speaker, however, often mixes tenses when he is not careful, and this is especially true of telling a story. An instance of the strange mixture of tenses may be found in Mark 4:35ff:

And he says (*λέγει*) to them on that day, when evening has (or had) come: Let us go over to the other side., And they take him (*παραλαβάνοντι*), as he was (*ἔν*), in the boat, and other boats were (*ἔν*) with him. And there comes (*πίπτει*) a great storm of wind, and the waves were beating (*ἐπέβαλλον*) into the boat . . . And he was (*ἔν*) in the stern . . . and they rouse (*ἐγείρουσιν*) him and say (*λέγουσιν*) to him . . . And he rebuked (*ἐπετίμην*) the wind . . .

Sudden changes in grammatical construction are found also in Mark, which again is perhaps pardonable from a speaker but not adequate in a literary record. The speaker often forgets the way he started a sentence and finishes it in another way without obscuring the meaning. Mark 6:8 is typical of this nature of the Evangelist's style:

He charged them that they should take nothing (*τίνα*, with subjunctive) for their journey . . . but shod with sandals (accusative plural participle--*ὑποδεδμένους*) and not to put on (infinitive--*ἐνδύσασθαι*) two coats.

Parentheses too are frequent in Mark. Many of these parentheses seem to be of the kind whereby a speaker is making an "aside." This is illustrated by the remark in 7:19: "making all meats clean." The present participle (*καθαρίζων*) has no antecedent. Here again the oral nature of Mark's tradition is evident, for a speaker often

makes parenthetical statements.

Repetitions abound in Mark. This is another characteristic of the speaker, who is inclined to repeat himself more than the writer. Some examples are:

1:32: "When evening came, when the sun set."

2:15: "many publicans and sinners sat down
... for there were many, and they followed
him."

5:15: "They beheld the demoniac sitting . . .
the one who had the legion in him."

12:44: "everything she had, her whole living."

Time and again Mark displays a fondness for double negatives which also abound throughout the book. Typical double negatives are:

3:27: "no one can enter a strong man's house
and plunder his goods, unlesshe first binds
the strong man; then indeed he may plunder
his house."

5:3: "no one could bind him any more, [not]
even with a chain."

11:14: "no one ever eat fruit from you again
[forever]."

A number of colloquialisms are also found in Mark which the other Synoptists shun. Rawlinson refers to these as "vulgarisms."⁴ For example, a word known to have been in vulgar use (*κοιλάττον*) is employed in 2:4, 9, and 11 to

⁴A. E. J. Rawlinson, St. Mark (London: Methuen, 1925), p. xliii.

denote the pallet or bed on which the paralysed man lay. Luke instead uses the word (*κλινίδιον*) for the bed, a word not having vulgar connotations. Similarly, the participle *ἐπιβαλὼν* in 14:72 has been of some trouble to commentators. There is evidence now that it was a colloquial expression in contemporary Greek which may be translated: "He set to and wept" or "He burst out weeping."⁵ Such colloquialisms are typical of oral style, for a freer use of such phrases is expected in speaking rather than writing.

There are some mistakes in the narrative of Mark, which again can best be explained by the kind of slip that a speaker makes when speaking from memory, but which a writer would be more apt to check and confirm. In 2:26 Abiathar is said to have been the High Priest when David ate the shewbread in the tabernacle, whereas the priest in the Old Testament account is Ahimelech.

In these characteristics, we see the evidence of the originally oral nature of the material. Guy is quite correct when he states that "the roughness of style is quite Markan" (as Rawlinson maintains) explains nothing and gives no clue to how such roughness originated.⁶ Much of the difficulty of the style of Mark is removed when the oral

⁵ Harold A. Guy, The Origin of the Gospel of Mark (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), pp. 60-62.

⁶ Ibid., p. 79.

nature instead of the literary quality is emphasized.

EVIDENCE OF DISORDER IN MARK

Soon after the priority of Mark had been established and critics believed that the earliest Gospel was simply pure history, the Marcan hypothesis became attractive to a whole generation of scholars. The hypothesis was that Mark's order and point of view were infallible and that his work preserved not only the true historical framework of the Lord's life, but also of his ministry and activity. Wilhelm Wrede, however, soon advocated that Mark was far from being a connected and trustworthy account of Jesus' life, and that the earliest Gospel is actually a very loosely assembled and artificial narration. Wrede maintained that "the incidents (of Mark) were very loosely and artificially connected--beads strung together on a chain, fragments of rock in the bed of stream, together not because they had originally been parts of the same rock but because they had been swirled together by the rapid-running stream of tradition."⁷ Wrede vividly claimed that it was impossible to book a through ticket from the beginning of the Gospel to the end because one had to constantly change trains and wait, sometimes at widely separated stations for

⁷Enslin, op. cit., p. 386.

very poor connections.

Though an increasing number of critics now hold that Mark is far from being an artless work, Taylor probably still speaks for the majority who claim that the earliest Gospel is not a carefully planned literary composition.⁸ Mark has been frequently styled "incomplete" by many critics who claim that it is a Gospel without beginning and without end.

Indeed, it must be noted that there are evidences of disorder in Mark. Scholarship would long ago have come to that conclusion without the statement of Papias that Mark was not written "in order." Mark's disorder may be classified into four groups: interruptions in the narrative, repetitions, haphazard arrangement, and lack of connection between statements (as classified by Guy).

1. Interruptions in the narrative

It has been demonstrated by C. H. Turner that the presence of parenthetical clauses are one of the features of Mark's Gospel.⁹ These vary in length from a few words ("they feared the multitude," 12:12) to several sentences

⁸Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan, 1953), p. 9.

⁹C. H. Turner, "Markan Usage," Journal of Theological Studies, XXVI, 145ff.

(as in the explanation of Jewish customs in 7:3-4). These are considered by Turner to be added by the author himself for purposes of explanation. He also claims that if these are omitted that the story runs more smoothly.

2. Repetitions

In a few places, the author repeats himself by giving an account of the same incident twice. These repetitions are sometimes called "doublets." Perhaps the most familiar doublet is the account of the feeding of the people in 6:34-44 and 8:1-9. Also after each account, there is a crossing of the Lake, 6:47-56 and 8:10; an occasion for controversy with the Pharisees, 7:1-23 and 8:11-12; a journey, 7:24 and 8:13; an incident where there is a mention of bread, 7:24-30 and 8:22-26. All these incidents may not justifiably be called doublets, but the two separate accounts of the feeding of the people are usually noted as variant accounts of the same occasion.

3. Haphazard arrangement

There are places in the Gospel where the geographical situation is confused and where the sequence of events appears jumbled. Mark 7:31 provides an example concerning a journey: ". . . he went out from the borders of Tyre and came through Sidon to the sea of Galilee, through the

midst of the borders of Decapolis." This has often been pointed out as a very impractical and extraordinary route. There is also another difficulty in this section, for Mark has previously said in 7:24 that Jesus went "away into the borders of Tyre and Sidon." In 7:31 he seems to start the same route again.

4. Lack of connection

There are places in Mark where there seems to be no connection, either topical or logical, between successive statements. This is true both of the narrative and in the sayings attributed to Jesus. In 4:10, for example, after the parable of the Sower, the disciples "ask him of the parables," even though only one parable has been related. In reply, Jesus proceeds to talk of "the secret of the kingdom of God" and to quote from Isaiah 6, while the question of the disciples is never answered, except by explanation of the parable of the Sower which is generally regarded today as the interpretation of the church of a generation later.

The evidence of disorder in Mark cannot be shirked. That there is also a definite literary design and orderly arrangement in Mark, however, also warrants strong emphasis.

EVIDENCE OF ARTISTRY IN MARK

In spite of the above evidence of disorder in Mark, many critics are now convinced that the Evangelist did have a very careful literary arrangement in mind when he wrote--chronological, geographical and topical.

A general chronological order is apparent throughout the book. The account starts with John the Baptist and his baptism of Jesus. This is followed by mention of the temptation of Jesus and his first preaching. The disciples are also called at the beginning of the book. The book then of course ends with the crucifixion and Easter story. Without a doubt, the book is accurate in its general outline.

Indications of a geographical order are also apparent. Jesus begins his work in Galilee, particularly in Capernaum, and his work ends in Jerusalem, which is most probable.

Evidence of a clear topical arrangement is also discernable. A series of conflict stories appear in Chapters 2 and 3; the questions put to Jesus in Jerusalem seem to be arranged in a similar manner in 11:27 to 12:34; a group of parables appear in Chapter 4; and a group of sayings are found in 9:41-50.

The most convincing spokesman for the order and artistry of Mark is Morton Scott Enslin, who writes:

It is time to stop our talk about the artless and unpremeditated and unimaginative style of this gospel. Too long we have regarded it, as did Papias, in terms of another gospel which we prefer, and have sought to make apologies for its lack of this or that . . . The longer I study this gospel, the more I am impressed by the daring genius of its author. Far from being an artless work, it bears on every page the evidence, will we but lose our presuppositions, of the author's creative design. Incident follows incident, not because they happened in that order or because they happened so to float together, but because the author deliberately and purposefully arranged them in that order in keeping with his calculated design.¹⁰

Enslin also claims that Mark was no mere editor, but an author and artist in his own right. Thus he says it is time to abandon the notion of Mark as a photographer and to let Mark the artist make his bow. On every page Enslin sees the definite, deliberate and conscious craftsmanship of the author of Mark. Curtis Beach agrees: "My conviction is that in its conception and in its construction, the Gospel of Mark is far more ingenious than we have realized."¹¹

We have seen that Mark presents a strange fusion of disorder and orderly arrangement. If the predominately oral nature of the book is kept in mind, much of the disorder is minimized, and the real craftsmanship of the au-

¹⁰Enslin, op. cit., pp. 387-388.

¹¹Curtis Beach, The Gospel of Mark (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), p. 16.

thor may be emphasized by the way he carefully selects and arranges his materials. My conviction is that the chief traces of the author's craftsmanship and artistry may be seen chiefly in the editing of his oral tradition.

THE STRUCTURE OF MARK

The Gospel of Mark may be roughly divided into two halves, with the central turning point of the book being found in Peter's confession of faith in 8:29 when the Messiah is made known to the disciples. But there is justification for a division of the book into five main sections, each having its own function and purpose:¹²

- | | | |
|------|--|------------|
| I. | Introduction (Prologue) | 1:1-13 |
| II. | The Mystery of the Messiah | 1:14-8:26 |
| | A. Beginnings of Galilean ministry | 1:14-3:6 |
| | B. Later stages of Galilean ministry | 3:7-6:13 |
| | C. Outside Galilee | 6:14-8:26 |
| III. | The Way of the Messiah to Jerusalem: Suffering, Service, Victory | 8:27-10:52 |
| IV. | Jerusalem: Conflict and Death | chs. 11-15 |
| | A. Ministry in Jerusalem | chs. 11-13 |
| | B. The Passion | chs. 14-15 |
| V. | The Easter Story | ch. 16 |

¹²A detailed outline may be found in the appendix

The earliest nucleus of Mark's Gospel was the passion narrative, and it is safe to say, as Grant does, that the Gospel grew backwards.¹³ The passion narrative dominates the whole story, for even in the first half of the Gospel, the author definitely has in mind the outcome of events.

In the first half of Mark no one knows of Jesus' messiahship except the Lord himself and the demoniacs. This is often referred to in Mark as "the messianic secret." Throughout this section, Jesus is pictured as refusing to have his messianic nature to become known in spite of his mighty works. One possibility for the messianic secret in Mark is, as Titus suggests: " . . . that the structure and purpose of Mark called for doubt and misunderstanding on the part of the disciples in order to provide a basis for instruction as to the true character of Jesus' messiahship. This the second part of the Gospel attempts to do."¹⁴

The first half of the Gospel is preparation for Peter's great confession in 8:27-30. At last Peter glimpses the truth of what men have been wondering about: "You are the Christ." With this confession, the intention

¹³Frederick C. Grant, The Earliest Gospel (New York: Abingdon Press, 1943), p. 39.

¹⁴Titus, op. cit., p. 146.

of the first half of the Gospel has been realized. The recognition of Jesus' messiahship came first to the disciples, but the implications of this revelation remain the intention of the succeeding chapters.

The section following Peter's confession of Jesus on the way to Jerusalem is quite different from that which precedes it. Jesus claims that his role is one of suffering, death, resurrection and victory, and asks his followers to emulate this example, and thereby also to find victory. However, Peter himself cannot accept this idea of messiahship, and he rebukes Jesus for suggesting such a tragic fate, which indicates a real misunderstanding of the manner of Jesus' messiahship. Jesus then instructs the disciples in the way of the cross and self-denial (8:34-38).

Jesus' secret is further shared in the supernatural account of the Transfiguration (9:2-8), but again he instructs his disciples not to disclose the information to anyone until after the resurrection. Only the disciples thus far "have" the secret, and of course even they do not fully understand (9:10).

Mark then emphasizes in a series of episodes how the way of integrity, loyalty, and sacrificial, loving service is the divine way (major parts of Chapters 9 and 10).

The first and only public declaration given by Jesus of his messianic role is given to the representatives

of the Jewish nation in 14:62, when the high priest asks Jesus: "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus replies: "I am; and you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." However, as Titus observes, the reply, "I am" means "I am the Christ, the Son of the Blessed," in keeping with the Son of man concept in Mark, a concept that Jesus uses in immediate reply to Peter's confession. It may be that the title "Son of man" was an attempt to reinterpret the messianic concept, permitting Mark to present his concept of Jesus as the suffering servant of the Lord more easily.¹⁵ In any case, Jesus' claim is rejected and he is condemned to death (14:63-65).

The final inkling of Jesus' messiahship is gained from 15:39, where the centurion exclaims: "Truly this man was a son of God." It is important to note that Mark has Jesus' true identity at last perceived by a Roman, a Gentile. Mark here seems to show that the hope for the future lay with the Gentiles. By the time Mark was written, the Jews had, in general, rejected the claims of Jesus.

We see here a definite and careful literary structure that progressively and ingeniously brings forth Mark's concept of true messiahship. How trustworthy the struc-

¹⁵Ibid., p. 148.

ture is in terms of historical reliability is a good question, but we may say without hesitation that Mark's general outline of the Lord's ministry is not only the best that we have, but that in the words of Grant, " . . . it is also entirely natural, consistent, and historically probable."¹⁶

MARK'S STRUCTURE IN RECENT CRITICAL OPINION

Recent commentators have devoted much study to the structure of Mark's Gospel, and some suggestions are so recent that critics have not had sufficient time to respond in depth to them.

Ernest Lohmeyer in his Das Evangelium des Markus of 1951 divides the Gospel into several main sections, largely on a geographical basis, and sees the distinct tendency on the part of the Evangelist to group the individual pericopes into threes. He also notes elaborate interconnections between the several parts of Mark, for example, 3:7-13 and 3:20-35 correspond in structure.

Austin Farrer's works on Mark of 1951 and 1953 are based on two observations--that the Evangelist uses the Old Testament typologically, and that he organizes his book in cycles and numerical schemes. Farrer, for example, points

¹⁶Frederick C. Grant, "St. Mark," Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), VII, 637.

out the presence of thirteen miracles, with "negative" (exercistic) and "positive" miracles alternating. His later work somewhat modifies his numerical scheme.

R. H. Lightfoot in The Gospel Message of St. Mark (1950) maintains that there are three significant points at which Jesus engages in prayer, and always at night and in times of tension. He claims also that Chapters 4 and 13 are parallel teaching sections.

Willi Marxsen in Der Evangelist Markus (1959) has studied what he calls the Redaktionsgeschichte of the Gospel, as distinct from Formgeschichte or the examination of the units of tradition. Perhaps his most important contribution is the theory that Mark was composed backwards--not, however, from the passion narrative, but from the point of view of 16:7.

The Archbishop of Quebec, Phillip Carrington, in Primitive Christian Calendar (1952) and According to Mark (1960) formulates the opinion that Mark's Gospel was designed for liturgical reading corresponding to a Christian calendar. We now turn to a closer inspection of Carrington's calendar thesis.

THE CHRISTIAN CALENDAR THESIS

Simply stated, Carrington maintains that Mark consists of a series of lections for use in the Christian

church on the successive Sundays of the year and of a longer continuous lection which was used on the annual occasion of the Passover at which time the Passion was commemorated. The series of lections for the year are numbered from 1 to 48 (or 49) in Codex Vaticanus (B), and the remaining lections (49-62) constitute the Passion lection. After eight years of reflection, it is interesting that in his second work his opinion remains the same concerning the calendar thesis, though he claims that the Christian calendar is only one factor to be taken into account. Carrington says:

I must confess . . . that after all the toil and labour, after all the writing and rewriting, after shaking off the fatigue of detail work and of conflict with endless theories, my impression remains the same. Tradition or no tradition, calendar or no calendar, there was a magnificent story-teller to whom we owe the major part of the Marcan narrative. Like a great artist in black and white, who creates a man with a few strokes of the pencil, and there is his bulk and his motion and his character--you know not how--so, in a few words, the Story-teller creates the Jesus-episode.¹⁷

Carrington claims he came by his calendar thesis in first researching the meaning of the Seed Parable, to which he claims, the composer of the Gospel attributes an importance which some critics have regarded as excessive. From this first stage of research, Carrington found that the 48

¹⁷Phillip Carrington, According to Mark (Cambridge, Eng.: University Press, 1960), pp. 1,2.

or 49 lections in Mark for the Calendar Year fit the Hebrew agricultural and ritual year without difficulty, and this, of course, would be the actual calendar by which the first Christians regulated their lives.

Bothered at first by some of the doublets or duplications in Mark such as the two accounts of the feeding of the people, Carrington noted that in writing a history one does not duplicate chapters, but in composing a lectionary, there is no objection to including two versions of the same lection.

From the basis of literary judgment alone, Carrington finally came up with this revised outline of the Marcan year:¹⁸

First half year	Tisri to Nisan I	LECTIONS 1-22
Second half year	Nisan I - Tisri	LECTIONS 23-48
Passion narrative	Pascal Day	LECTIONS 49-62

Carrington makes it clear, however, that it does not follow from the calendar theory that the ministry of Jesus was confined to a single year, as was supposed in some circles in the second century. He claims, however, that this does explain how that idea grew up, for if the Gospel narrative "from baptism to passion" was customarily read through in a single year, it would undoubtedly give that

¹⁸Phillip Carrington, The Primitive Christian Calendar (Cambridge, Eng.: University Press, 1952), p. 32.

impression.

Regretfully, while some critics acknowledge the calendar thesis today, there has been very little response to it by the reputable critics. Some question it on the basis that in order to complete the scheme Carrington is obliged to assume a midsummer festival which cannot be easily derived from known liturgical practice. It is significant that lifelong critics of the Gospel, like F. C. Grant, have not openly endorsed the calendar thesis. It is my conviction, though not without some hesitation, that Carrington's lectionary system must be dismissed as an ingenious attempt to structure Mark too rigidly into a given pattern.

THE PROBLEM OF MARK'S ENDING

In a literary study of Mark, the problem of the ending of the Gospel must be singled out for special consideration. The question is whether Mark really intended to end his account in 16:8 with the apparently incomplete phrase "for they were afraid" (ἐφοβούντο γὰρ). Nineham calls this the greatest of all literary mysteries.¹⁹

Critics of previous generations assumed that the Gospel had been mutilated or that something had happened to

¹⁹D. E. Nineham, The Gospel of Saint Mark (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 39.

the author before he could finish the book, and therefore it was common to speak of Mark's "lost ending." As one who claimed that the ending had been lost, Burkitt maintains that the last phrase should be translated: "For they were afraid of . . . "

However, more recent criticism, under the influence of Lohmeyer, Lightfoot and F. C. Grant, holds to the opinion that the Gospel originally ended at verse 8. This makes Mark close without any account of the Resurrection, but Mark's whole book presupposes it. Mark's style is very abrupt anyway in places, and for the Evangelist's purpose, his ending can be seen to be a perfectly legitimate way to end a Gospel.

To the objection that the ending might have been worn or torn off, Carrington makes the convincing argument that the end of a papyrus roll, instead of being on the outside where it could easily become mutilated, is actually on the inside and well protected. He maintains that those who talk about a lost ending must first produce the evidence that he actually wrote more.²⁰

Critical opinion is unanimous today in declaring that the so-called longer and shorter endings of Mark are actually in style, structure and content non-Markan, and

²⁰Carrington, According to Mark, p. 335.

that they are not found in the earliest and best manuscripts. The longer ending probably originates from a second century presbyter, Aristion, or Ariston. The shorter ending most likely arose in Egypt in the fourth century.

The problem of Mark's ending appears insoluble for the present, though it involves an interesting study. A further discovery of an early manuscript may help in bringing a solution. In the meantime, it is my belief that there is no clear evidence for a "lost ending" of Mark, for the Gospel legitimately ends where it does.

SUMMARY

We have noted the special literary importance of Mark's Gospel because it sets the stage for an inquiry into later writings of its kind. The Gospel of Mark is invaluable because it was the first attempt at a conscious literary movement in Christendom.

Though the non-literary style of Mark's Gospel is apparent (especially in the Greek), the style of Mark appears to be close to the everyday speech of the time, and bears witness to a naturalness in speaking rather than an uncultured style of writing. Mark provides ample evidences of literary disorder, however, the story is told in an artistic and powerful way and it can be easily seen that the author had a careful literary arrangement in mind

as he wrote. When the oral nature of the book is emphasized, the problem of disorder is not so great. In fact, the careful craftsmanship and orderly arrangement of the author is plain in the way the material is edited.

While the passion narrative dominates the whole story, the book is divided into two halves, the central turning point being Peter's confession in 8:29. Here the messiah is made known to the disciples, but not really understood by them. Before Peter's confession, the book presents the "hidden" messiah; after it the character of the messiah is made known.

Many ingenious attempts to structure Mark's Gospel according to various systems have been devised from the literary structure of the Gospel itself, but none thus far have met with wide acceptance.

CHAPTER III

THE MAJOR THEME OF MARK

The major theme of Mark may be called the "Manner of Messiah"--including the Messianic appointment, role, suffering, death, resurrection, and expected return of Jesus. An accompanying major theme may be called the "Way of the Disciples," by which Jesus' followers are exhorted to emulate his way by giving themselves in humble service and persistent faithfulness through trials, with the promise that endurance will be rewarded in the kingdom of God. This corollary theme, along with its implications, will be examined in the next chapter.

It must be remembered that Mark, though he expressed the common Gentile Christian faith of his day, is not really writing as a theologian. He takes for granted the primitive Christian tradition concerning Jesus. William Manson calls Mark the Gospel of the "mighty works of Jesus."¹ Mark writes as a Christian, but he is not really interested in "theology" as such, for he makes no real effort to interpret his data in terms of general ideas. His manner, for example, in contrast with Paul is very marked. Paul lives in the realm of ideas, and he more or less takes

¹William Manson, Jesus the Messiah (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946), pp. 58-61.

tradition for granted, but Mark scarcely has in his writing the most elementary idea of what it would require to be a theologian. His is simply expressing the faith of the church of his day. Rawlinson says: "The theology of the Gospel is implicit rather than explicit, popular and untechnical rather than either systematic or speculative."² In one sense, it was fortunate that Mark wrote in such a fashion, for as Grant claims, upon the basis of Paul's teaching, taken alone, Christianity might possibly have floundered a century rather in the rising sea of Gnosticism. But with Mark's compilations of the historical traditions, later amplified by other evangelists, the church was able to hold true to its course upon the historic origins of its faith.³

This is not to say that Mark's Gospel contains no theology at all. Mark's theology is essentially a Christology, for almost all the ideas of the Gospel are related to the unique position of Jesus. Mark does not speculate on Christology like Paul does; rather Mark's interpretation of the nature of Jesus is by way of function and dramatic action. In this sense, Christology is by no means the

²A. E. J. Rawlinson, St. Mark (London: Methuen, 1925), p. 50.

³Frederick C. Grant, The Earliest Gospel (New York: Abingdon Press, 1943), p. 149.

whole of Christian theology, but it is still the heart of it. We shall best understand the major theme of this Gospel as we concentrate on the manner of Messiah that Mark presents.

MESSIANIC APPOINTMENT

For Mark, Jesus is from the beginning of his ministry the anointed Messiah who is designated as both Son of God and Son of Man. Instead of becoming Messiah at the resurrection, as Paul maintained, Mark goes a step beyond Paul's earlier writings and claims that Jesus was already the Messiah during his earthly life. As Johannes Weiss puts it in his comment on Mark 1:1: "Mark adds the divine title with which Jesus is honored in the Gentile Christian communities, 'Son of God.' This is more than a casual addition; the real aim of the writing that follows is to show that this name, which the community had given the Risen and Exalted One, was already proper to the earthly Jesus of Nazareth."⁴

In the creedlike passage of Romans 1:2-4, Paul sets forth the primitive faith that Jesus became Son of God at the resurrection. Paul claims to be set apart for the gos-

⁴Grant, op. cit., p. 153.

pel, the gospel which God had promised beforehand through prophets in the holy scriptures, " . . . concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead." Mark, however, goes beyond this, for he claims that Jesus was Son of God before his death and resurrection, for he has the voice from heaven proclaim at Jesus' baptism: "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased" (1:11). This proclamation is again repeated at the transfiguration, where the words are not addressed to Jesus himself but to the three close disciples: "This is my beloved Son; listen to him" (9:7).

It is most probable that it was Mark who began the process of evaluating Jesus' Messiahship in different terms. For Mark claimed that the earthly life of Jesus was Messianic: that he did not become Messiah at the resurrection. The later evangelists pressed the Messianic origin back to still an earlier point with their virgin birth stories. There is no sign that Mark was actually aware of the virgin birth tradition, at least he never alludes to it. Matthew and Luke claim that Jesus was born "king of the Jews,"⁵ and that he was announced, even before his

⁵Matthew 2:2

birth, to be "holy, the Son of God."⁶ John goes the farthest possible distance and claims that Jesus was the Incarnate Word, who had been with God from the beginning and had at the proper time become flesh to dwell upon the earth.⁷ Step by step we see the origin of Jesus' heavenly Messiahship being taken back to the very confines of time and space and then beyond.

Though some maintain that the Son of Man concept in Mark implies the pre-existence of the Messiah, it is very doubtful that Mark himself would have gone that far. Other than in this concept, the pre-existence theory is nowhere else implied in Mark. This is not to say that Mark does not have a "high" Christology, for Mark's Christology is as "high" as that of any in the New Testament, though Mark himself had probably not embraced the pre-existence idea.

In any case, it was Mark who believed that Jesus must have known while he walked upon this earth what his destiny was to be, and that he was not merely the Messiah-designate or Messiah-elect while he lived upon the earth, but the Messiah himself.

This brings us to the interesting study in Mark called the Messianic secret. Many have wondered why if the disciples believed in Jesus' Messiahship during his

⁶Luke 1:35.

⁷John 1:1-14.

lifetime they did not proclaim it. In answer to this, Mark solves the problem with his theory of the Messianic secret. As one reads in the Gospels he is impressed by the apparent fact that only after the resurrection do the disciples begin to understand in earnest the real nature of Jesus' mission.

Mark expresses in several ways his conviction that the Messiah was a secret not understood until after the resurrection. (1) The demons recognized him, but were forbidden to make him known (1:25,34; 3:12). (2) Jesus sought to avoid publicity for his miracles (1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26), except in one instance when the man healed may have been a Gentile (5:19-20). (3) He often withdrew from the crowds (1:35,45; 3:7; 4:35; 6:31; 7:24; 9:30). (4) He refused to give a sign to "this generation" (8:12). (5) More than once he gave private teaching to his disciples (4:33-34; 7:17-23; 9:28-31; 13:3-37), and the parables were not understood because they were intended to be secret. (6) The Jewish people had a wilful hardness of heart (at least their leaders), and this was a judgment of God upon them, or at least part of God's plan (14:27,49). (7) Jesus refused to let the secret of his nature be known until the Son of Man should be raised from the dead (8:30; 9:9).

From all this, Wilhelm Wrede in his Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien of 1901 claimed that the thought

of Jesus as Messiah arose only after the resurrection, and that the entire theory of the Messianic secret was an intrusion into the tradition, either read into it by Mark or at a late pre-Markan stage in the development of the tradition. Most critics, however, leave Wrede when he comes to the conclusion that before the resurrection the idea that Jesus was, or might be, the Messiah had never occurred to anyone.

A good many critics reject Wrede's thesis totally. Taylor, for example, argues that Jesus would never have been confessed as the Messiah after the resurrection unless he had been recognized as such during his ministry. He claims that Jesus' crucifixion is unintelligible unless he was condemned as a Messianic pretender, that the inscription on the cross and the narratives of Peter's confession, the entry into Jerusalem and the trial before the Sanhedrin strongly attest the presence of a Messianic tension during the ministry of Jesus. While claiming that the Messianic secret is untenable as Wrede presents it, Taylor admits that the Messianic secret lies behind almost every narrative in Mark, but that it is not a hypothesis imposed on the record from without, but an "element integral to the tradition itself."⁸

⁸Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan, 1953), p. 123.

It is easy to see that Mark believed that the true nature of Jesus was not apprehended during his ministry. To this point we can agree with Wrede that belief in Jesus as Messiah came basically after the resurrection. But it very well may be that Jesus imposed the silence himself because of the nature of his mission as he conceived it to be. His conception of his mission may have been very different from the Jewish concept of Messiahship. As Grant says: "He may very well . . . have repressed the exuberant hopes and speculations of those who were 'looking for the redemption of Israel,' and may well have thought that possibly he himself was to be, in a different way, the destined fulfiller of their hopes."⁹

We cannot rule out the possibility that part of the theory of the secret Messiahship is the product of Mark himself, but this does not commit us to Wrede's view that the early Christians wanted to ascribe to Jesus Messianic claims, but had to represent them as secret because it was remembered that he made no such claims publicly.

It may be, as Eric L. Titus observes, that the theme of the secret Messiah is essentially a Marcan product in that it grows out of his view of Jesus as the suffering

⁹Frederick C. Grant, "St. Mark," The Interpreter's Bible, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), VII, p. 644.

Messiah, a view untenable to his contemporaries.

Once the historical Jesus is embraced within the Messianic concept, the whole problem of his death on a cross looms as a problem. The "secret" in a real sense reflects the tendency to shrink from the idea. Mark employs it dramatically from rejection to full acceptance. In a real sense this is a recapitulation of the history of the church with reference to the problem of Jesus suffering as the Messiah.¹⁰

In any case, we may conclude, with Grant, that Mark's theory of the Messianic secret is not one of his major themes. The secret idea is subsidiary to Mark's whole interpretation of the life of Jesus as already the Messiah while upon the earth, and long before his resurrection.

THE ROLE OF THE MESSIAH

The role of the Messiah in Mark may best be seen from his use of the names and titles given to Jesus. These are titles which no doubt Mark inherited from early Christian tradition.

1. Jesus

Under this personal name, Jesus is mentioned 81 times. "Jesus Christ" is used only once (1:1), "Lord Jesus" only in the spurious ending (16:19), and "Christ Jesus" is never used. The adjective "Nazarene" is found in

¹⁰Eric L. Titus, from personal communication.

four places: 1:24, 10:47; 14:67; and 16:6. The primitive character of Mark is easily seen here, for nothing in the Gospel suggests the use of Jesus as a cult name. Mark even more frequently speaks of Jesus without any designation, as "he" or "him," and it is taken for granted who is meant.

2. Christ

In seven instances only is the term Christ used (1:1; 8:29; 9:41; 12:35; 13:21; 14:61; and 15:32), and in no place does Jesus use it of himself. Once again the primitive character of Mark is apparent in the failure to use this term more frequently. The Messianic secret is probably bound up with the lack of usage of the term "Christ."

3. Son of David

This Messianic title is used three times in the narrative; twice in the story of Bartimaeus (10:47 f.), and once by Jesus in controversy with the scribes (12:35), but not with direct reference to himself. By contrast, however, Matthew uses the title in six additional instances.

4. Son of Mary

Mark 6:3 is the only New Testament passage which applies this title to Jesus, and there the passage is textually suspect. However, Jesus is not described in Mark as "the son of Joseph" as he is twice in both Luke and John.

He is referred to as "the carpenter" in Mark 6:3, which more probably should be "the son of the carpenter" as in Matthew.

5. Lord

Though the Gospel was no doubt written from the faith that Jesus is Lord, Mark shuns from its usage in the narrative. Mark has *κύριε* once, where it means no more than "sir" from the lips of the Syro-Phoenician woman (7:28). *ὁ κύριος* appears in 11:3, with no more real significance than "master" or "teacher," and there it may have reference to the owner of the colt and not to Jesus. By contrast, it lacks in Mark the deeper reverential meaning of the term in many instances in Luke and John prior to the resurrection.

6. Rabbi, Teacher

Mark frequently uses the designation of rabbi or teacher in speaking of Jesus. Rabbi literally means "My great one," and the nearest English equivalent, according to Taylor and Burkitt, is "Sir." Rabbi was a term of respect addressed to Jewish teachers of the Law, and it is used by Mark in at least four places. "Teacher" (*διδάσκαλος*) is a more common designation in Mark (used 11 times, and once by Jesus himself in 14:14). Mark simply employs this term as an equivalent to Rabbi for the benefit of his Gen-

tile readers.

7. Prophet

Though Mark himself does not use this as a title for Jesus, 6:15 and 8:28 show that Jesus was looked upon as a prophet, and Jesus speaks of himself in this regard in 6:4.

8. Son of Man

The term *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* is almost unintelligible to a Greek (from the Aramaic bar nasha, literally meaning "man"), but it is capable of conveying the sense of "the man," and thus of being used in a Messianic sense. It is found only in the Gospels, with the exception of Acts 7:56, and the title appears 14 times in Mark. The origins of this title go back at least to Daniel 7:13, in which "one like a son of man" comes with the "clouds of heaven" to the "Ancient of Days," representing the Jewish people. It is also found in the Book of Enoch where "the Son of Man" is a superhuman figure of great dignity and power. Earlier in Ezekiel 2:1 and Psalm 8:4 the term is used as a synonym for "man."

Taylor summarizes the principal interpretations of the Son of Man concept into five categories. (1) Many critics believe that Jesus was speaking of man in general (Wellhausen, Klostermann, Jackson and Lake, Manson, Branscomb, McNeile, C. J. Cadoux). (2) Jesus was thinking of

the elect messianic community of which he is the head (J. Drummond). (3) It may be suggested that Jesus was referring to himself (a) as the Messiah, or (b) as the "Ideal" or "Representative Man." The latter is accepted by Victor, Driver, Swete and Bartlet. (4) Another possibility is that Jesus was speaking of himself without expressly claiming to be the Messiah, using the indeterminate form bar nash = 715 "a certain man," "one," "I who speak." (5) A widely accepted view is that the "Son of Man" in Mark represents the theology of the primitive Christian community (Bultmann and Bousset). On the whole, Taylor himself claims that there is most to be said for the third view or possibly the fourth.¹¹

For our part, we must conclude that we have in the Son of Man concept primarily a creation of Christian thought, " . . . the consequence of continual reflection upon the career of Jesus, who is seen in the blazing splendor of his risen, glorified state 'at God's right hand,' from whence the heavenly Son of Man was expected to come."¹²

9. Son of God

There is a double Christology in Mark, for Jesus is represented both as Son of Man and Son of God. The two

¹¹Taylor, op. cit., p. 197.

¹²Grant, "St. Mark," p. 642.

terms are not equivalent, for the Son of God concept is totally different from that of the Son of Man, as will be noted. There can be little question that of the two terms the "Son of God" is nearest and dearest to Mark and the Gentile Church. It represents the most fundamental element of the Marcan Christology.

The name appears five times: at the beginning in 1:1, in the confession of the demoniacs (3:11; 5:7), in the high priest's question (14:61, "the Son of the Blessed"), and at the end in the centurion's declaration (15:39). Also to these must be added the words of the voice at the baptism (1:11), and in the narrative of the transfiguration (9:7), and possibly in the phrase "nor the Son" in the saying concerning the day (13:32). In each case, the term comes at crucial points in the narrative.

In the Old Testament, the term is applied to angels (Genesis 6:2; Job 1:6; 38:7), to Israel (Hosea 11:1; Exodus 4:22), to the King (II Samuel 7:14; Psalm 2:7; 89:26), and to the righteous Israel (Ecclus. 4:10; Sol. 13:8, 17:30; 18:4). None of these titles, however, really elucidates what Mark has in mind. In one sense, the title, "Son of God" is a title higher than "Messiah," even though the concept of Messiah is contained in it.

The title "Son of God" cannot be derived from the Messianic category of the Old Testament. In native Jewish

thought, God could not have a son, for that concept would deny the oneness of God. But for Gentile Christianity, possibly even for Diaspora Judaism, there could exist another divine being--~~ce~~ other beings--in the presence of God, subordinate to God, after the pattern of the Greek "sons of God." The concept "Son of God," represented the very highest attainment of popular pagan religion. Such divine beings as

Asclepius, Heracles, the Dioscuri, the saviors and helpers of mankind, who voluntarily underwent privation and endured suffering in order to benefit mankind--these, rather than the vague deities of the Oriental 'mystery' cults, were the gods dearest to the hearts of men in the Greco-Roman world. Not that early Gentile Christianity was one more hero-cult, with a Savior Christ instead of Asclepius, the divine physician, or Heracles, the helper; but the term 'Son of God' was taken over from paganism as a term already filled with rich religious meaning--somewhat as other terms, 'Savior,' 'Lord,' 'Logos,' 'Redeemer' were taken over by the early Greek-speaking church.¹³

Rawlinson claims that by his usage of the term "Son of God" Mark plainly means a supernatural being, supernatural in origin, and therefore supernatural in power.¹⁴ But in spite of this, the Gospel also stresses the manhood of Jesus, for Mark portrays to his readers that the Son of God is also genuinely human. Jesus is angry (3:5), grieves at

¹³Ibid., p. 643.

¹⁴Rawlinson, op. cit., p. li.

the hardness of hearts (3:5), falls asleep (4:38), sighs deeply (8:12), marvels at unbelief (6:6), is moved with indignation at those who would forbid the little children (10:14), is limited in knowledge (13:32), greatly troubled at the approach of death (14:33), and breaths his last (15:39). Mark does not think of Jesus as being omniscient, and he records frankly that because of the attitude of the people of Nazareth he could do no mighty work there, except for a few minor cures (6:5).

On the other hand, Mark pictures the Son of God as having the power to read the secrets of men's hearts (2:8; 3:4-5) and the authority to forgive sins on the earth (2:10). He is also said to rise again from the dead (9:9, 31; 10:34), and to be the Christ, the Son of the Blessed who now sits at the right hand of power, and who shall come with the clouds of heaven (14:62). As Nineham says: "Anyone who reads the Gospel straight through will recognize that it is as Son of God rather than as teacher or prophet that St. Mark presents" Jesus.¹⁵

By a paradox, it can be claimed that "Son of Man" is in some respects a more exalted title than "Son of God" because the former is the new apocalyptic title of the heavenly Man, the Primal Man, or Urmensch, who is to appear

¹⁵D. E. Nineham, The Gospel of Saint Mark (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 48.

at the end of the days, while the latter is the old theocratic Messianic title given to anointed kings in ancient times. However, the "Son of God" concept in Mark is the truly honored one, for this best of all conveys Mark's purposes. Of all the titles, "Son of God" was nearest and dearest to Mark and the Gentile Church because it represented the fundamental element of the role of the Messiah.

PASSION

In the passion (suffering and death) of Jesus, Mark sees the Messiah, as Rawlinson says: " . . . not in spite of His sufferings--as the earliest believers of all may for a time have been disposed to express it--but precisely because of His sufferings."¹⁶ A special emphasis in the "theology" of the Gospel is the emphasis which is laid on the doctrine of the cross. For in the cross Mark sees a specifically Christian conception of the Messiahship of Jesus apart from the Messianic doctrines of Judaism.

We have seen that the earliest nucleus of the Gospel was the passion narrative. The passion narrative is now recognized to be the oldest continuous narrative in the Gospel, and that Mark's Gospel grew backwards, so to speak,

¹⁶Rawlinson, op. cit., p. lii.

is widely accepted. By a tremendous paradox, Mark sees the divine being, the Son of Man, coming to earth and being put to death by wicked men, even though the death was part of the divine plan, and is "a ransom for many" (10:45). This "ransom" is a fundamental key-word of the Gospel. Mark sees the way of suffering, rejection, disgrace and crucifixion leading to the Messiah's eventual triumph and exaltation "after three days" (8:31), and a coming again in power. Grant points out that the explanation of this is not to be found upon an earlier doctrine of the "suffering Messiah," for there is no evidence of the existence of such a doctrine. Nor is there found in Jewish thought the evidence that the two ideas of Messiah and suffering servant (II Isaiah) had been combined. There is no evidence of this before the second century A.D., when both ideas, he claims, were interpreted to mean suffering, oppressed Israel, someday to be victorious.¹⁷

Mark has Jesus die as a martyr, but not a martyr to a cause, for this "martyrology" is different--"Jesus dies because he cannot free himself from God, because his will has been utterly and without reserve made over to God, and he does not ask to see his way or to know the meaning of each successive step. The meaning would be clear enough

¹⁷Grant, "St. Mark", p. 642.

when the battle was over, the victory won."¹⁸

The secret theme in Mark deepens in the passion narrative. Jesus is forsaken by his disciples (14:50), rejected and condemned by the religious leaders of Israel (14:63-64), denied by Peter (14:66-72), sentenced to death by Pilate (15:15), scourged, (15:15), mocked by the soldiers (15:16-20), physically exhausted (15:21), brought to the place of the execution, where in the hands of wicked men he dies (15:34). All outward appearances do not bear witness to divine and royal power and dignity. The passion narrative concludes, however, with the significant testimony of the centurion: "This man was a Son of God" (15:39), which is one of the peaks of the Gospel and leads into the brief story of the resurrection.

The only problem with this verse is that one would expect the rendering "the son of God" instead of "a son of God." As it stands the meaning could merely be "This man is not a criminal but a good and righteous person." However, Titus points out that "whatever the original, most primitive, tradition might have meant, it is doubtful if Mark or his readers would have so construed the words [as above]. They would have taken them to be a confession of faith. In other words, they would represent for Mark the

¹⁸Grant, The Earliest Gospel, p. 185.

final stage in the unfolding revelation of Jesus as the Christ and Son of God."¹⁹

We see here a martyr Gospel, written to a martyr church. Nineham says: "If they 'had' to 'suffer' so had he 'had to suffer.'"²⁰ The Gospel was designed for the strengthening and encouraging of Christians facing suffering and even martyrdom, like their Lord.

Mark has little to say which explains the suffering of Jesus or of his disciples, but so far as Jesus is concerned, he believes he had to suffer. There is no evidence here, however, of the Pauline thought of "atonement" or "reconciliation." Probably if Mark had formulated any formal opinion on the matter it was along the lines of the common Jewish belief in the "vicarious efficacy of innocent suffering,"²¹ although this cannot certainly explain his total understanding of the work of Jesus.

Throughout the narrative the main impression gained is not so much that of human treachery and wickedness as it is of the calm certainty with which Jesus goes to his death. The primitive story in Mark is one of utter simplicity. Jesus is represented as making no reply or defense when

¹⁹Eric Lane Titus, Essentials of New Testament Study (New York, Ronald Press, 1958), p. 149.

²⁰Nineham, op. cit., p. 33.

²¹Ibid.

Pilate asked him: "Are you the King of the Jews?" (15:2) except "You have said so" (15:3). Throughout he is portrayed as trusting in God, and now, if it is God's will that he must drink the cup of death, he is ready. The other Gospels have added words and scenes to the Marcan narrative, but Mark simply portrays the utter calmness with which Jesus meets his death.

Why Jesus or any man must suffer is not specified, and a sense of mystery accompanies the simple scene of the passion story. Johnannes Weiss says: "Only he can understand the secret of the Cross who has disposed himself toward service, humility, renunciation, suffering, and martyrdom."²²

RESURRECTION

We have said that the heart of Mark's Gospel is the passion narrative, but it was because the resurrection followed it that the passion had significance. Mark's presentation of the Messiah is in terms of one who had died and risen from death, and whose death and resurrection was basically one continuous act in the inauguration of God's kingdom.

While Mark had in mind the passion narrative from

²²Rawlinson, op. cit., p. lii.

the very beginning of his Gospel, we must now add that Mark used the passion to lead up immediately to Jesus' resurrection and exaltation. And this meant exaltation as Messiah --not as just another resuscitation of a dead person who would die again like, for example, Lazarus. For Mark and the church of his time, the resurrection included the glorification of the Messiah as the celestial Son of Man. Though Mark did not need to wait for the resurrection to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, the resurrection is used to point up Jesus' exaltation.

It is evident that the resurrection story stands apart from the passion narrative proper. The detailed reference to the women in 16:1 after the similar passages of 15:40 and 47 indicates that a different cycle of tradition is used, which is fully sustained by its character and contents. Mark, of course, constructs his account on the basis of tradition, and not as an eye-witness.

Mark's brief account does not stress the physical or material nature of Jesus' risen body, nor does he present any account of a resurrection appearance, as do the other Gospels. Matthew records two appearances: (1) to the women as they fled from the tomb, and (2) to the eleven on a mountain in Galilee. Luke records three appearances: (1) to Cleopas and another on the road to Emmaus, (2) to Peter, and (3) to the eleven and others in Jerusalem. John has

four appearances: (1) to Mary Magdalene in the garden, (2) to ten disciples on the same Sunday in Jerusalem, (3) to ten disciples, plus Thomas, a week later, and (4) to seven disciples by the lake of Galilee. It is obvious that discrepancies have crept into the accounts of the other Gospel writers. Mark, however, records no appearances, and this is one reason why some critics maintain that the ending of his Gospel has been lost.

In fact, the earliest conception of the resurrection in the New Testament is not based on the empty tomb (though it may perhaps be implied), but on the appearances of Jesus to his followers. The story of the empty tomb is apparently a later development. The earliest evidence we have of the resurrection is that which Paul says in I Corinthians 15:3-8:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

It is significant that no empty tomb account is mentioned here.

This has caused some critics to say that the faith in Jesus' resurrection should not be understood in terms of

an empty tomb, as Beach says: " . . . the Easter story grew out of the faith, it was not the event which caused it."²³ In its original form, the resurrection belief was simply the faith that Jesus was still alive in heaven, for they believed that a man of such spiritual power could not be overcome by death. In regard to this concept, Grant says: "God did not, God could not abandon him in death--in spite of the mysterious last cry that fell from his lips. Death could not hold him in restraint--not such a one as he, surely."²⁴

When Mark 16:7 refers to an appearance about to take place to Jesus' disciples in Galilee, Lohmeyer claims that this does not refer to a resurrection appearance there, but to the final Parousia which was to take place there, rather than in Jerusalem. Though Lohmeyer's thesis is improbable, it has caused a good deal of study by critics.

In summary, though Mark did not need to wait until the resurrection plainly to set forth Jesus' Messiahship (for that was evident during his life), the resurrection is important to Mark because it logically follows the Messiah's passion, and it serves as the crowning witness of his exaltation.

²³Curtis Beach, The Gospel of Mark (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), p. 18.

²⁴Grant, The Earliest Gospel, p. 186.

EXPECTED RETURN

That the primitive gospel was essentially an eschatological proclamation is plainly evidenced in the New Testament. The gospel announced a future salvation, one believed to be in the near future. The early church fixed its gaze upon coming events, and these coming events were viewed as being supernatural events. They believed that the judgment was to usher in the full and final establishment of God's kingdom.

The earliest Christology was really "an eschatology, in which the central figure was the same--the risen, glorified Christ . . . who was now at the right hand of God, and was soon to come in glory to inaugurate the New Age."²⁵ The teaching of Jesus himself may be said to have a definite eschatological outlook.

Mark's Gospel presents an eschatology with a strong apocalyptic cast. Not only is the coming of the Messiah the object of his earnest expectation, but the character of the Parousia is emphasized primarily in Chapter 13, which has come to be known as the "Little Apocalypse." The teaching attributed to Jesus in this chapter is not now generally believed to be authentic.

²⁵Grant, The Earliest Gospel, p. 147.

Chapter 13 maintains that the Paraousia will be preceded by such discernible signs as wars, earthquakes, famines, heavenly portents, and that the Son of Man is visibly to appear in the clouds (13:5-8, 24-27). Mark claims that the end is not yet (13:7-10), but he clearly has no doubt that it is imminent.

Ever since Timothy Colani's Jesus-Christ et les croyances messianiques de son temps of 1864, critics have widely claimed that Chapter 13 is a composite chapter including material of a general apocalyptic nature that should not be attributed to Jesus. Colani's five main points for claiming that the bulk of Chapter 13 is not authentic are significant. (1) The discourse does not answer the question of the disciples as to the time of the destruction of the temple. (2) The interpolated discourse presents the classic threefold division of Jewish apocalyptic. (3) The clause, "Let the reader reflect" (13:14), refers to the contents of the discourse, not to the book of Daniel, of which no mention has been made. The discourse therefore was written from the first and never spoken. (4) The predictions in 13:6-13 reflect actual historical events, while that which is prophesied concerning the "abomination of desolation," with its accompanying terrors, never took place. (5) Most important, the outlook of the discourse reflects that of the Jewish Christian Church, and not that

of the historical Jesus.²⁶

Colani's theory is generally accepted today (Grant, McNeile, Rawlinson, Bultmann, Branscomb), but a few critics still try to present arguments that Chapter 13 is authentic (Beasley-Murray, Cranfield). We must hold that, although it cannot be proved, probably some unknown Christian edited a small Jewish-Christian apocalypse for the purpose of warning the Christians of his day at the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 to flee before the city's fall. The apocalyptic warning then was probably incorporated by Mark into his Gospel at the point where we now have it, on the assumption that since it was attributed to Jesus, that this was the most likely place for it.

The words of Jesus in the chapter do not fit in well with his teaching elsewhere, and as Grant says, might just as well be found in I Enoch, II Esdras, or any other of a dozen apocalyptic writers of the period.²⁷ While the apocalyptic element is found in the Gospels, Jesus' teaching is not necessarily "apocalyptic" in nature, that is, in the sense characteristic of the apocalyptists. Its presence in the Gospel tradition probably came in early in the history of the tradition--to find its climax in Matthew's Gospel,

²⁶As summarized by G. R. Beasley-Murray, A Commentary on Mark Thirteen (London: Macmillan, 1957), pp. 1-2.

²⁷Grant, "St. Mark," p. 854.

only to be rejected by John.

In one sense, the eschatological theme may be found in several places in Mark's Gospel, even in the early chapters. Some of the sayings of Jesus seem to indicate the kingdom's future manifestations in an eschatological sense. Thus, the kingdom of God is compared to a mustard seed, "which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs" (4:31-32); the implication being that someday the kingdom of God will be manifest in all its splendor. The parable of the self-growing seed has a similar point (4:26-29).

Whether or not the bulk of Chapter 13 should be attributed to Jesus, Mark and his church believed in the exalted Messiah who was to come soon to fully inaugurate God's kingdom. Because of Jesus' exaltation, the primitive Christians believed that they too would sometime in the future experience all the glories manifest in the New Age.

SUMMARY

We have seen that Mark's major theme is the "Manner of the Messiah"--including his Messianic appointment, role, passion, resurrection and expected return. A corollary main theme may be called the "Way of the Disciples," since Jesus' followers are encouraged to emulate his way.

Mark does not write as a theologian, but takes for granted the primitive Christian tradition he receives. Therefore, the "theology" of Mark is implicit rather than explicit. Mark does not speculate about Christology; rather his interpretation of Jesus is in terms of function and dramatic action.

Instead of maintaining that Jesus became the Messiah at his resurrection (as Paul earlier claimed), Mark maintains that Jesus was already Messiah during his earthly life. Right from the beginning, Mark sees Jesus as the "Anointed one," designated both as Son of God and Son of Man. Possibly it was Mark who began the process of viewing Jesus Messiahship in different terms, for the later Gospels pressed the Messianic origin back to still an earlier point.

One problem, unique to Mark's Gospel, is known as the "Messianic secret." Since Mark expresses in several ways the fact that the Messiah was really a secret until after the resurrection, some critics have claimed that this was for the obvious reason that no one ever thought of him in terms of the Messiah until after his resurrection. However, there is ample evidence within the Gospel that Jesus was in fact recognized as the Messiah during his earthly ministry. In any case, the secret theme is subsidiary to Mark's whole interpretation of Jesus being the Messiah while he lived upon the earth, and long before his resurrection.

There is basically a double Christology in Mark: "Son of Man" and "Son of God." The terms are not equivalent, for the "Son of Man" concept, though capable in its Old Testament sense of being used in a Messianic sense, probably represents the theology of the primitive Christian community. The "Son of God" term is dearest to Mark and the early church, for it plainly means a person of supernatural power and origin, and best conveys the fundamental nature of the Messiah in this Gospel.

Mark sees Jesus as Messiah not in spite of his sufferings, but because of them. The passion narrative does not so much emphasize human treachery and wickedness as it does the calm certainty with which Jesus approaches his death. The suffering is not really explained, but no doubt a martyr church could identify with it.

The passion mainly has significance because of the resurrection which follows it. The first accounts, however, of the resurrection were not based upon the empty tomb idea, but on the appearances of Jesus to his disciples, and quite possibly upon the conviction that such a man could not be overcome by death. In any case, Mark shows that Jesus did not need to wait until the resurrection to become the Messiah, for he was already the Messiah during his earthly life.

The eschatological nature of the Gospel may be seen

at several points in the Gospel besides the "Little Apocalypse" in Chapter 13. It is best to understand the bulk of Chapter 13 as a composite account that reflects the thought of the Jewish Christian Church, and not that of the historical Jesus. It is evident that the primitive Christians expected the Messiah's return at an early date, and that they believed they would share then in the exaltation of their Lord.

CHAPTER IV

THE GOSPEL OF MARK: IMPLICATIONS FOR MINISTRY

We have noted that a corollary major theme of Mark may be called "The Way of the Disciples." The religious dimension of Mark's Gospel must certainly be emphasized if we are to do it justice. It is not enough only to study the literary and thematic structure of this Gospel for, like the other books of the New Testament, it is primarily an adventure into the realm of religion. The above are interesting studies, but they bear little relationship to the real purpose for which the Gospel was written. Titus observes:

To take the Gospel of Mark as an example, the quality of its Greek and the moving force of its dramatic structure provide fascinating areas of study. But to read Mark simply as literature is to fail to participate in the religious dimension of experience which the author was trying to communicate. The primary factor to be associated with this Gospel is religion.¹

We must therefore seek to capture for our own generation how the Gospel of Mark is spiritually valid in terms of present day discipleship and ministry. Rawlinson points out that our generation is probably more conscious than previous generations of the fact that the mentality and at-

¹Eric Lane Titus, Essentials of New Testament Study (New York, Ronald Press, 1958), p. 3.

mosphere of thought is that of the first century, and not that of the twentieth.² It is true, however, that while the mentality and atmosphere of this Gospel is not that of today, its religious message is still spiritually valid for our own as well as for all generations. Nineham adds that only with the aid of all the historical and critical enlightenment possible, in order to find the meaning of the Gospel as a spiritual message to the church for which it was originally addressed, is it possible to find the spiritual message for our day.³ In this chapter, we shall seek to find the religious message of Mark for the church of his own day, and see how it is spiritually valid for discipleship in general and ministry in particular in any age.

THE WAY OF THE DISCIPLES

1. Loyalty

The whole central section of the Gospel (8:27-10:45) is built around a nucleus of discipleship sayings with reference to loyalty to the Lord in the face of persecution. Mark is writing to a martyr church, as the internal evidence indicates. Since the Lord's life was the way of the cross, that way, Mark states, is to be followed. Mark is

²A. E. J. Rawlinson, St. Mark (London: Methuen, 1925), p. lv.

³D. E. Nineham, The Gospel of Saint Mark (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 52.

writing a book of guidance and support for his fellow Christians who were in constant danger. No doubt Mark was familiar with the plight of some Christians who were forced to enter the arena with its hungry wild beasts, and of other Christians who were coated with tar and strung up and ignited in Nero's gardens when the Christians were made the scapegoat of mob vengeance after the great fire in Rome.

When Mark writes, the martyrdoms had fallen off, but there was no assurance that they might not begin again; thus Mark seeks to strengthen the loyalty of the Lord's followers. Grant agrees with K. L. Schmidt that the Gospels generally are "people's books" (Volksbücher), not meant for publication or wide circulation, but reading by a group, especially by a non-literary group. This, says Grant, is most true of Mark.⁴ We are introduced in this Gospel to a spiritual society of poor saints in a great city. They were for the most part a community of poor men and women--no doubt ignorant and unsophisticated, but a group none the less who had turned from "dumb idols to serve a God living and true." As a result they daily confronted imminent perils of martyrdom, torture and death. When Mark was written, Rawlinson points out, the issues were joined between

⁴Frederick C. Grant, "St. Mark," Interpreter's Bible, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), VII, p. 634.

Caesar and Christ.⁵

Mark sets forth the way of discipleship in terms of absolute loyalty with no reservations. He notes that such allegiance to the Lord might well mean the abandonment of family and friends, and that it involves the ability to forsake all if necessary. The loyal disciple must be ready to tread the way of the cross, even as the Lord did. In this regard Mark quotes the words of Jesus:

And he called to him the multitude with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels' (8:34-38).

Though it has often been claimed that these verses represent the church's reflection on later events and are not authentic words of Jesus, in any event Mark uses them to emphasize his point. In the requirement of martyrdom, Mark does not say that all Christians must literally be crucified, and much of the language may be considered figurative. Mark does not encourage the Christians to court martyrdom--he merely encourages them to be ready if they

⁵Rawlinson, loc. cit.

should be called upon to give their lives. While the resurrection message is not put in words here, it is implied throughout the whole section dealing with the loyalty of discipleship. Mark does not only present the "Manner of the Messiah," as indicated in the previous chapter, but he also sets forth the vital religious message that the inner meaning of Christianity is basically a life to be lived.

From the milieu of the first century comes abiding values to the church of the twentieth century and of any age. Though the outward conditions change markedly over the centuries, the basic nature of Christian discipleship remains the same. The Christian in all generations is called upon to weigh his understanding of the faith in terms of loyalty. It is evident that Mark does not speak so figuratively of the Christian's cross, for example, that he only refers to the disappointments and misfortunes that come to all people. Rather, Mark speaks of the Christian's cross in terms of a "deliberate choice," as Luccock says, "of something that could be evaded."⁶ This "deliberate choice" in a religious sense is the absolute loyalty involved in Christian discipleship in any age or situation, whatever the cost. Conditions change, but the abiding re-

⁶Halford Luccock, "St. Mark," The Interpreter's Bible, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), VII, 770-71.

ligious value of Mark is that the basic faithfulness and loyalty of discipleship remains the same in all ages.

2. Service

The theme of service is prominent in all the Gospels, and Mark primarily deals with it in 9:33-37 and 10:42-45. In each instance, concern rests not with the future kingdom of God, but with service in the Christian community. The question of true greatness is first brought up from the occasion of the disciples disputing with one another over who was the greatest. The reply of Jesus is revolutionary: "If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (9:35). The term "servant" is not very different from "minister" or "slave," for service or ministry was the slave's duty in life. However, the term "servant" here (*δουλος*) is a more considerate term than "slave" (*δοῦλος*).

Mark's main answer to the question of greatness comes not in Chapter 9 when the issue is first brought up, but in Chapter 10 in conjunction with the request of James and John " . . . to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory" (10:37). Jesus' teaching is nowhere more beautifully and significantly expressed:

You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be

great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (10:42-45).

As in many other places, Mark presents Jesus himself as the disciples' perfect pattern.

The phrase, "ransom for many," in verse 45 is one of the few theological statements in Mark, and it has been the source of much controversy. Many critics question the genuineness of the saying and attribute it to Pauline influence or to another hand (Wellhausen, J. Weiss, Bousset, Bultmann, Loisy). It must be admitted that the idea of the ransom is not prominent in the Gospels, and the word *λύτρον* is not used elsewhere in the New Testament, except in the similar teaching section in Matthew 20:28.

It is significant that this saying in Luke belongs at the Supper (Luke 22:27), and that no mention is made of the ransom. Luke's reformulation of the saying, however, is hardly to be looked upon as an intentional omission or repudiation of the "ransom" theology, for it is likely that Luke received this section from another source than Mark.

It is best that this problematic verse be seen as originally belonging to the Marcan source (Rawlinson, Grant, Taylor, Johnson). For on the affirmative side, it must be remembered that vicarious suffering is native to Jewish thought, for it was held that the Jewish martyrs died for

the redemption of their people (II Macc. 7:37, 38; IV Macc. 17:22). Also it should be noted that the familiar suffering servant of the Lord idea in Isaiah 53 might well provide an adequate background to the verse. Grant's conclusion provides the best light; he says that the verse "should be understood in as simple and figurative, i.e., poetic and dramatic, sense as possible, rather than with a fully developed theological meaning. If so understood, it may well be accepted as authentic."⁷

In any event, the servant theme is one of the most important themes in a spiritual sense that Mark wishes to stress. Beyond that, it is a theme applicable to disciples in every generation. The teaching is revolutionary, for all the common measurements of importance and greatness are overthrown. Jesus pointedly asserts that the only real greatness lies in service, a theme that is given special emphasis in each of the Gospels. It is significant, as Luccock says, that Jesus' purpose could not be expressed in the passive voice, be served, but only in the active, serve.⁸ This concept is spiritually valid because in this theme of service rests the real nature of Christian discipleship.

⁷Grant, op. cit., p. 787.

⁸Luccock, op. cit., pp. 817-18.

3. Reward

It would be a mistake to assume that Mark's Gospel is not concerned with rewards. While the idea of reward is more prevalent in Matthew than it is in Mark, Mark does reflect upon the sacrifices made by his Christian contemporaries and the rewards which will result. It must also be stressed, however, that Mark does not think in terms of reward by itself, for that would be a perversion of the gospel.

The first instance of reward in Mark is an odd one, for it speaks of the disciples as being on the receiving end of service, instead of being the ones who are giving it: "For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose his reward" (9:41). This perhaps indicates friendliness on the part of outsiders, which the disciples and the early church were to welcome. Most likely, however, its earliest and most accurate form is given by Matthew, where the disciples are on the giving end: " . . . whoever gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42).

The saying in Mark most likely should be connected with the previous verses concerning children (9:36-37), and

read in much the same fashion as Matthew, though it is possible that there were two independent traditions of the sayings. Luke makes no reference to the verse whatsoever.

The second instance pertaining to reward in Mark's Gospel is more revealing than the first. The refusal of the rich young man to give up his possessions to follow Jesus (10:17-22) provides a good setting for stating the rewards of those who have renounced all to follow the Lord. Matthew inserts the question of Peter to make the connection more smooth: "What then shall we have?" (Matt. 19:27). Jesus' answer in Mark is:

Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life (10:29-30).

This saying clearly reflects the experiences of the early church--a persecuted body, even when not called upon to suffer actual martyrdom. It is significant that the reward in Mark includes provisions both for the present age and the world that is to come. Both Matthew and Luke do not give special attention to the temporal benefits.

Other instances of reward in Mark are found with reference to discipleship: " . . . many that are first will be last" (10:31); " . . . whoever would save his life will

lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it" (8:35); and " . . . he who endures to the end will be saved" (13:13). The greatest reward in Mark, of course, is the implication of eternal life for those who meet the requirements.

Bultmann observes that the attitude of Jesus to the idea of reward is paradoxical: "He promises reward to those who are obedient without thought of reward."⁹ It would be wrong to say that the element of reward is foreign to discipleship. Reward in religion, however, is always second class. Faith must be found primarily in terms of response, not reward. The reward is often the response itself. The reward of discipleship in any age is the by-product of loyalty and service, and not something sought for itself.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MINISTRY

The implications for ministry in Mark's Gospel may be best seen from the ministry of Jesus himself as the earliest Gospel presents him. Several main elements of the Lord's ministry are worthy of special consideration.

1. Manner of Proclamation

Though Mark contains fewer sayings of Jesus than

⁹Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan, 1953), p. 408.

either Matthew or Luke, he is well aware that Jesus' active work consisted largely of preaching and teaching. Instead of a long teaching section at the beginning of the public ministry, Mark summarizes the central message: "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel'" (1:14-15).

There can be no doubt that the main theme of Jesus' preaching was the kingdom of God. The preaching of Jesus is seen to be somewhat similar to that of John the Baptist, for both claimed that the kingdom was at hand and stressed the necessity of repentance. Yet the message of Jesus was clearly different in tone and implication from the Baptist's message of judgment. Jesus' message was the word of good news. Branscomb says:

The Christian word gospel (good news) was not a distortion of Jesus' teachings. Throughout His sayings there runs a note of confidence and trust in God which is absent from the recorded sayings of the prophet of the wilderness. With John the central thought is that of judgment. With Jesus an equal if not greater emphasis falls on the blessedness of life in harmony with the will of God, and on the desire of the heavenly Father that not one of these little ones should perish.¹⁰

¹⁰B. Harvie Branscomb, The Gospel of Mark (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937), p. 26.

Though many critics point out that the phrase "believe in the gospel" sounds like a later Christian addition, it is entirely possible that Jesus referred to his own message as the "good news." Mark has no doubt caught the primary message of Jesus as being "the reign of God is at hand!" Therefore repentance and belief in the good news was claimed to be necessary. Yet as Wellhausen points out, Jesus did not go about repeating constantly the same stereotyped formula, for "His teaching was essentially occasional, being called out by the circumstances of the moment."¹¹

In a devotional book on Mark, Elton Trueblood says that the remarkable thing about Jesus' message was its mood and tense. "The mood was personal and urgent . . . Such a message, given with burning passion, is inevitably exciting because the completed present is the most moving of all tenses . . . The good news started with the message of God in the present tense."¹²

The main theme of Jesus' message and the mood of his proclamation must be the theme and mood of his messengers in all generations. It is significant that Jesus chose the method of proclamation to convey his message. He might have chosen other means: "Jesus could have written books.

¹¹Rawlinson, op. cit., p. 13.

¹²Elton Trueblood, Confronting Christ (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), pp. 5-6.

Instead, 'Jesus came preaching.' He trusted His most precious sayings to the blemished reputation and precarious memory of his friends."¹³

The kingdom of God is the main element of Jesus' gospel, and it includes many aspects eschatological, ethical and social--yet none of these excludes the other. As Ernest F. Scott says: "The kingdom as he [Jesus] conceived it was at once the higher, spiritual order, the better righteousness, the larger human brotherhood, the life of inward fellowship with God. None of these excludes the other."¹⁴

In any age, the messengers of the Lord will do well to emulate his basic message and manner of proclamation. The preaching of repentance is of course necessary and vital, but it must always be remembered that the kingdom of God "at hand" is basically "good news."

2. Call to Participation

It was not uncommon for Jewish teachers to call disciples to follow them wherever they went. Josephus tells of having lived for three years with Banus, an ascetic religious teacher, and there are numerous references in the Talmud to rabbis with pupils who followed them.

The call of Jesus' disciples is given a prominent

¹³Luccock, op. cit., p. 656. ¹⁴Ibid.

place in Mark, and the account is placed at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry (1:16-20; 2:14; 3:13-19). It is evident in Mark that Jesus' preaching began before he called any of his disciples, but it is not mentioned how soon after his preaching ministry began that he called the disciples. In the first call of the four Galilean fishermen (1:16-20), Mark seems to indicate that there was no previous acquaintance on the part of Jesus and his disciples. However, it is unlikely that this was the case. Nineham says that if the disciples had no previous knowledge of Jesus ". . . their dramatic action would have been inexplicable and irresponsible, and they would not even have known what was meant by becoming fishers of men."¹⁵ There is evidence that these disciples did know something about Jesus before accepting his call. According to the Fourth Gospel (1:40 ff.), at least Simon and Andrew had been with Jesus at the preaching of John.

Jesus had a different purpose, as Mark presents him, than the rabbis did in calling disciples. The rabbis would primarily teach the Torah and then have their disciples follow them in the practical application of the Torah. While Jesus spent a significant time teaching his disciples, his main objective was not teaching or studying, but to

¹⁵Nineham, op. cit., p. 71.

"fish for men," in the sense of bringing them into the kingdom.

The point of the story was a religious one for the early church in terms of the Lord's call and the Christian's response, and that is also its primary purpose in Mark. The implication is that all Christians, even if not called in the same manner as the early disciples, have the responsibility of responding wholeheartedly to the call of Christian discipleship.

Further, especially in our own day, we see the importance of the intensive training of a small group of men. In each Gospel, the training of the disciples as a small group occupies a prominent place. It is evident that Jesus gave himself largely to the special training of a chosen few, rather than to the general preaching to multitudes. We can only speculate as to the reasons for calling "those whom he desired," but the work with his chosen disciples seems to take precedence even over his public preaching. The possibilities for this type of training of small groups in the church are exciting.

Luccock says: "All the great movements in Christianity have been based on the training of small groups. The implication of this for the church is overwhelming."¹⁶ It

¹⁶Luccock, op. cit., p. 686.

is true that too often the church has expected far too much from preaching to the crowds without the personal and small group touch. The emergence of small groups in the church today has proved to be one of great value. John L. Casteel, who has helped to bring the rise of small groups about, says: "The widespread appearance of small personal groups may be seen, in years to come, as one of the most significant religious movements of our time."¹⁷

Of course, small groups as an important function are not limited to religious groups. A. Paul Hare, in a recent handbook on small groups, says: "Everywhere I turn the small group is being rediscovered"¹⁸--in psychiatric hospital wards, classrooms, and industry--to mention a few. In the religious area, Robert Raines has devoted a major part of a recent important book to the significance and rise of small groups (koinonia groups) in the church today.¹⁹

The direct calling of individual men, one by one, as Mark portrays the recruitment of the fishermen of Galilee, is a timeless basis of the nature of the call to Christian

¹⁷John L. Casteel, Spiritual Renewal Through Personal Groups (New York: Association Press, 1959), p. 17.

¹⁸A. Paul Hare, Handbook of Small Group Research (Glencoe, N. Y.; Free Press, 1962) p. v.

¹⁹Robert A. Raines, New Life in the Church (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961).

discipleship. Further, the emphasis on the intensive training of small groups is of major implication for ministry in any age.

3. Necessity of Withdrawal

In nine places in the narrative, Mark portrays Jesus as wishing to escape from the crowds, and in three instances the Lord is found at prayer. Typical instances are: (1) "And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed" (1:35). (2) "And he said to them [disciples], 'Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while'" (6:31). (3) "Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat . . . while he dismissed the crowd. And after he had taken leave of them, he went into the hills to pray" (6:45,46). The instance of withdrawal and prayer in Gethsemane (14:32-42) is perhaps the most familiar instance of the Lord praying.

In these instances, the Lord made himself deliberately unavailable to needy people. Not, as Trueblood says, "because He failed to care for them, but because, even in His life, the inner wells had to have time to be refilled."²⁰ His need for prayer indicates that he was not sufficient of himself but dependent upon God.

²⁰Trueblood, op. cit., p. 9.

The implications here for ministry are significant. No spiritual fulfillment is really possible without the lonely place. These lonely places are made; they do not just "happen."²¹ The renewal of spiritual life is of absolute priority for effective service.

Luccock continues:

The truth that Jesus could always draw a crowd is not any more noteworthy than that he could leave one so often. It is a great art, that of being able to leave a crowd. Jesus did not depend on the deceptive presence of a throng. He could walk away from it. He could leave it when something more central, more vital, more permanent, called.²²

In the same manner, the implication for ministry here is that one cannot bring anything of real value to a crowd (or to a congregation) unless one knows how to leave it for the lonely place.

4. Mission to "Outsiders"

The call of Levi (2:13-14) and the meal in his house (2:15-17) provoked the Pharisees to ask the disciples (vs. 16b): "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" In one sense, the calling of Levi (Matthew) was even more objectionable to the Pharisees than the unschooled fishermen, for Levi was a tax collector, a Jew closely allied to the Roman tyranny, and therefore an unmistakable outcast

²¹Luccock, op. cit., p. 665. ²²Ibid., p. 709.

and "sinner." Jesus replies: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (2:17). This is closely allied in Luke with the story of Zaccheus (19:10): "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." That Jesus was a friend of publicans and sinners is also indicated in Matt. 11:19, Luke 7:34 and 15:2.

Jesus' reply reflects a sense of mission--" . . . a physician can scarcely do anything for the sick if he avoids contact with them."²³ It has been pointed out that this may be sarcasm; in any case it reflects a criticism of Judaism. Lohmeyer sees in this saying, connected with the table-fellowship, a reference to the coming messianic banquet (cf. 6:30-44; also Matt. 22:1-4, 8-10 and Luke 14:16-21).²⁴

The Pharisees (as their very name implies) were outraged in Mark's portrayal of such a genuine departure from their religious teaching of separation from the outcast. Jesus does not seek to excuse his conduct, but speaks in terms of a radical departure from the Pharisaic teaching.

The implications here for the church are staggering. This implies that the church does not exist for itself, but for those outside it. The major determination of the church

²³Grant, op. cit., p. 675.

²⁴Sherman E. Johnson, The Gospel According to St. Mark (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 64.

should be to seek out "sinners and outsiders," rather than to avoid them. There is no place for Christian ostracism whatever. Like its Lord, the church's interest should primarily be in the welfare of broken and needy men, not in seeking alone to keep its own unblemished reputation.

5. Healing of Souls and Bodies

Although there are several problems involved in Mark's account of Jesus healing the paralytic (2:1-12),²⁵ this narrative sets forth Mark's belief that the Lord's ministry not only involved the physical healing of bodies, but spiritual restoration and healing as well. When the paralytic is brought to the Lord, Jesus' first words seem irrelevant, since he was brought for physical healing: "My son, your sins are forgiven" (vs. 5). Most critics maintain that this statement is a reflection developed in the early church. The entire episode is intended to show Jesus' ability to heal in both the spiritual and physical sense, for the account states that after the forgiveness of the boy that Jesus healed him: "I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home" (vs. 11).

It is true that Christianity is concerned with both souls and bodies, with the total man. It is significant

²⁵For a full discussion, see Branscomb, op. cit., p. 43.

that Mark portrays Jesus as going deeper than the physical afflictions. He did not merely bring external remedies to internal ills--he brought also the spiritual restoration. "Jesus saw that the man needed more than physical mending: he needed spiritual restoration."²⁶

On the other hand, as Trueblood adds, it is a great mistake to think of the gospel as purely spiritual in nature. There are purely spiritual religions, but Christianity is not one of them. "Throughout Christian history," he says, "there has been concern for bodies as well as souls. There has been almost as much emphasis upon hospitals as upon places of worship, and the feeding of the hungry, including those formerly known as enemies, has been a marked feature of the modern Christian age."²⁷ The effort to minister to the whole man, rather than simply to his spiritual needs, does not represent a departure from the Christian genius, for this is deeply rooted in the original gospel.

The implications for ministry are clearly evident. Exactly how the Lord healed, we do not know, but that we must seek to release men from human suffering as well as bring to men spiritual renewal is surely implied, and this demands the most complete form of ministry.

²⁶Luccock, op. cit., p. 670.

²⁷Trueblood, op. cit., p. 53.

SUMMARY

"The Way of the Disciples" as a major theme of Mark emphasizes the religious dimension of the Gospel. Since Mark's Gospel, like the other books of the New Testament, primarily adventures into the realm of religion, the religious force of the Gospel must be emphasized. In this sense, Mark's Gospel is spiritually valid for every generation and age.

Mark writes to strengthen the loyalty of the Lord's followers. He speaks of an absolute loyalty without reservations, an allegiance that will involve risks. He maintains that the inner meaning of discipleship is basically a life to be lived. His call for loyalty in spite of hardship challenges the faith of Christians in every day.

Service, likewise, is a requisite of discipleship. Real greatness is presented in terms of gracious service, a revolutionary concept that challenges the world's measurements.

Rewards for loyalty and service are promised in Mark, though unnecessary preoccupation with rewards is viewed as a perversion of the gospel. In a paradoxical sense, rewards are promised to those who are obedient without thought of reward.

Special implications for ministry may be seen in

Mark from the way he presents the ministry of Jesus himself. The main theme of Jesus' preaching was the kingdom of God. The Lord's preaching, however, differed from that of John the Baptist, for while the Baptizer's preaching sternly stressed judgment and repentance, the Lord's preaching emphasized repentance and "good news," hence his tone was different. It is essential that the "good news" element be stressed in preaching.

While many Jewish rabbis called disciples to follow them for purposes of instruction, Jesus' call to participation was different in that it had an evangelistic theme, to make "fishers of men." The religious meaning here is in terms of the call of the Lord and the response of the disciples. The intensive training of a small group of men is stressed in Mark, as in all the Gospels. Small group training is an important aspect of the church's ministry which today is being recaptured in a new and dramatic sense.

Mark portrays the necessity of withdrawal for prayer and rest as a concern receiving strong priority in the Lord's life. In these periods, Jesus made himself deliberately unavailable to needy people in order that he might renew his own spirit and fulfill his ministry. The lonely place is viewed in Mark as a requisite for spiritual fulfillment.

Jesus reflects a sense of mission in referring to

himself as a "physician" in search of the sick. He is often pictured as being a friend of publicans and sinners, which outraged the Pharisees, who did not fellowship with "outcasts." The church must take this message seriously, and exist not for itself but for those outside the fellowship of whatever condition.

Mark stresses the Lord's ability to heal in both the spiritual and physical sense. That he was not content to deal with one at the expense of the other is indicated in the spiritual and physical healing of the paralytic. In the same manner, Christian ministry in its highest and fullest sense demands a service to the whole man.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing pages we have noted that the Gospel of Mark has finally begun to receive the attention it deserves in modern biblical scholarship. While Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels, it is the most valuable from a historical and literary point of view because it was the first Gospel to be written. It is also vital because of its importance in the study of the other Synoptics, and the Gospel of John as well. The steady stream of interest in Mark's Gospel continues because it is the primary source of information concerning the life and mission of the Lord.

The Papias tradition, to the effect that Mark's main source was Peter, was once widely accepted, but now it has been seriously questioned. There is evidence that Mark, whoever he was, borrowed from many sources in writing his Gospel. Critics are almost unanimous in agreeing that the Papias tradition is vulnerable, especially when too much is based upon it. The form critics tend to ignore the Papias tradition almost altogether.

Mark's Gospel was written from both a theological and historical point of view. While there is heated debate as to which of these takes precedence, it is best to consider Mark as an "evangelical" writing. Mark's historical interest is plainly secondary, and his Gospel is more in nature like the Fourth Gospel than previously recognized.

Like John, Mark was primarily expressing his religious faith and the faith of the Christian community, rather than merely giving instruction in history.

The theory that Mark is essentially a Pauline Gospel is generally abandoned today. Common Gentile Christianity, rather than Paulinism, lies behind Mark's Gospel. Mark does not write as a theologian, but primarily takes for granted the primitive Christian tradition of his day concerning the faith.

A good deal of interest today centers in Mark's literary quality and structure, since his Gospel inaugurated Christianity as a formal literary movement. One reason for Mark's long neglect was because of his essentially non-literary Greek, a matter of concern to the critics. It is now believed that Mark's style was close to the everyday speech of his time, and that the originally oral nature of the material must be emphasized rather than the uncultured style of writing. While there is a lack of literary refinement in Mark, it has a very careful literary design, and hence is a strange fusion of literary order and disorder. There is evidence of artistry in Mark, for the real nature of the author's craftsmanship is to be seen in the arrangement of his material. Attempts, however, to structure the Gospel into too rigid patterns (such as the Carrington liturgical calendar thesis) have not met with wide accept-

ance.

Mark's major theme is the life and mission of the Lord, and he views Jesus as the Messiah right from the beginning of his ministry. While earlier Christians like Paul had claimed that Jesus became the Messiah at the resurrection, Mark began the process, no doubt, of evaluating the Messiahship in different terms.

The idea of the secret Messiah is unique in Mark's Gospel, and we cannot rule out the possibility that much of the theory is the product of Mark himself since it grew out of his view of Jesus as the suffering Messiah, a view untenable to Mark's contemporaries. In any event, the secret idea is subsidiary to Mark's interpretation of Jesus as the Messiah from the beginning of his ministry.

Mark's corollary main theme is a religious message. He exhorts the Lord's followers to make their discipleship real in terms of loyalty and service, and promises rewards to those who follow the Lord's way in glad obedience. In this sense also, Mark's Gospel is spiritually valid in any generation.

The implications for ministry in Mark spring from the ministry of the Lord himself as Mark presents him. Like loyalty and service, these too are relevant and spiritually valid for the ministry in any age.

In all its elements, the Gospel of Mark is a majes-

tic piece of religious literature. Its supreme religious value is that it brings the first account of the life of the Lord vividly and dramatically before the reader, and it invites him to believe and to follow.

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APPENDIX

OUTLINE OF MARK'S GOSPEL

I. Introduction (1:1-13)

- A. John the Baptizer and Jesus (1:2-11)
 - 1. John the Baptizer (1:2-8)
 - 2. The baptism of Jesus (1:9-11)
- B. The temptation of Jesus (1:12-13)

II. Jesus in Galilee (1:14-9:50)

- A. About the Sea of Galilee (1:14-5:43)
 - 1. Jesus returns to Galilee (1:14-15)
 - 2. The call of the first disciples (1:16-20)
 - 3. Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum (1:21-28)
 - 4. Jesus in the house of Peter (1:29-31)
 - 5. Healing the sick at even (1:32-34)
 - 6. Jesus' departure from Capernaum (1:35-39)
 - 7. Healing a leper (1:40-45)
 - 8. Healing a paralytic (2:1-12)
 - 9. The call of Levi (2:13-14)
 - 10. Eating with publicans and sinners (2:15-17)
 - 11. The question of fasting (2:18-22)
 - 12. Plucking grain on the sabbath (2:23-28)
 - 13. Healing the withered hand (3:1-6)
 - 14. Jesus' popularity and his cures (3:7-12)
 - 15. The appointment of the twelve apostles (3:13-19)
 - 16. The charge of the scribes (3:20-30)
 - 17. Jesus true family (3:31-35)
 - 18. The parable of the sower (4:1-9)
 - 19. Explanation of the parable (4:10-20)
 - 20. Exhortation to understanding (4:21-25)
 - 21. Parable of the self-growing seed (4:26-29)
 - 22. Parable of the mustard seed (4:30-32)
 - 23. Parabolic method of teaching (4:33-34)
 - 24. The storm on the lake (4:35-41)
 - 25. The Gerasene demoniac (5:1-20)
 - 26. The daughter of Jairus (5:21-24, 35-43) and the woman with an issue of blood (5:25-34)
- B. Wider journeyings (6:1-9:50)
 - 1. The visit to Nazareth (6:1-6)
 - 2. The mission of the disciples (6:7-13)
 - 3. Herod's impression of Jesus (6:14-16)
 - 4. The death of John the Baptizer (6:17-29)
 - 5. The feeding of the five thousand (6:30-44)
 - 6. Jesus walking on the sea (6:45-52)

7. The landing at Gennesaret (6:53-56)
8. The tradition of the elders (7:1-23)
9. The Syrophenician woman (7:24-30)
10. Healing a deaf and dumb man (7:31-37)
11. The feeding of the four thousand (8:1-10)
12. The Pharisees demand a sign (8:11-13)
13. The leaven of the Pharisees (8:14-21)
14. The blind man of Bethsaida (8:22-26)
15. Peter's confession (8:27-30)
16. The first passion announcement (8:31-33)
17. The disciples' way of suffering (8:34-9:1)
18. The Transfiguration (9:2-8)
19. The coming of Elijah (9:9-13)
20. The epileptic boy (9:14-29)
21. The second passion announcement (9:30-32)
22. The question of greatness (9:33-37)
23. The strange exorcist (9:38-41)
24. Offenses (9:42-48)
25. Salt (9:49-50)

III. Jesus in Jerusalem (10:1-15:47)

- A. On the way to Jerusalem (10:1-52)
 1. Marriage and divorce (10:1-12)
 2. Blessing the children (10:13-16)
 3. The meaning of discipleship (10:17-31)
 - a) The rich young man (10:17-22)
 - b) The danger of riches (10:23-27)
 - c) The reward of renunciation (10:28-31)
 4. The third passion announcement (10:32-34)
 5. The request of James and John (10:35-45)
 6. Bartimaeus (10:46-52)
- B. In Jerusalem (11:1-12:44)
 1. The entry into Jerusalem (11:1-10)
 2. Departure for Bethany (11:11)
 3. Cursing the fig tree (11:12-14)
 4. Cleansing the temple (11:15-19)
 5. Lesson of the withered fig tree (11:20-26)
 6. The question of authority (11:27-33)
 7. Parable of the wicked husbandmen (12:1-12)
 8. The question of tribute to Caesar (12:13-17)
 9. The question of the resurrection (12:18-27)
 10. The question of the great commandment (12:28-34)
 11. The Messiah not son of David (12:35-37a)
 12. Warning against scribes (12:37b-40)
 13. The widow's offering (12:41-44)

- C. The apocalyptic discourse (13:1-37)
 - 1. The impending fall of the temple (13:1-2)
 - 2. Introduction to the little apocalypse (13:3-3)
 - 3. The disciples to be persecuted (13:9-13)
 - 4. Persecution in Judea (13:14-23)
 - 5. The Parousia of the Son of man (13:24-27)
 - 6. The date of the Parousia (13:28-37)
- D. The passion narrative
 - 1. The plot against Jesus (14:1-2)
 - 2. The anointing in Bethany (14:3-9)
 - 3. Judas' treachery (14:10-11)
 - 4. Preparation for the Passover (14:12-16)
 - 5. Prediction of the betrayal (14:17-21)
 - 6. The Last Supper (14:22-26)
 - 7. Prediction of Peter's denial (14:27-31)
 - 8. Jesus in Gethsemane (14:32-42)
 - 9. The arrest (14:43-50)
 - 10. The flight of a young man (14:51-52)
 - 11. Jesus before the high priest (14:53-65)
 - 12. Peter's denials (14:66-72)
 - 13. Jesus before Pilate (15:1-5)
 - 14. Jesus condemned to death (15:6-15)
 - 15. The mocking (15:16-20)
 - 16. The Crucifixion (15:21-32)
 - 17. Jesus dies on the cross (15:33-41)
 - 18. Joseph of Arimathea (15:42-47)

IV. The empty tomb (16:1-8)

244 66
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